This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

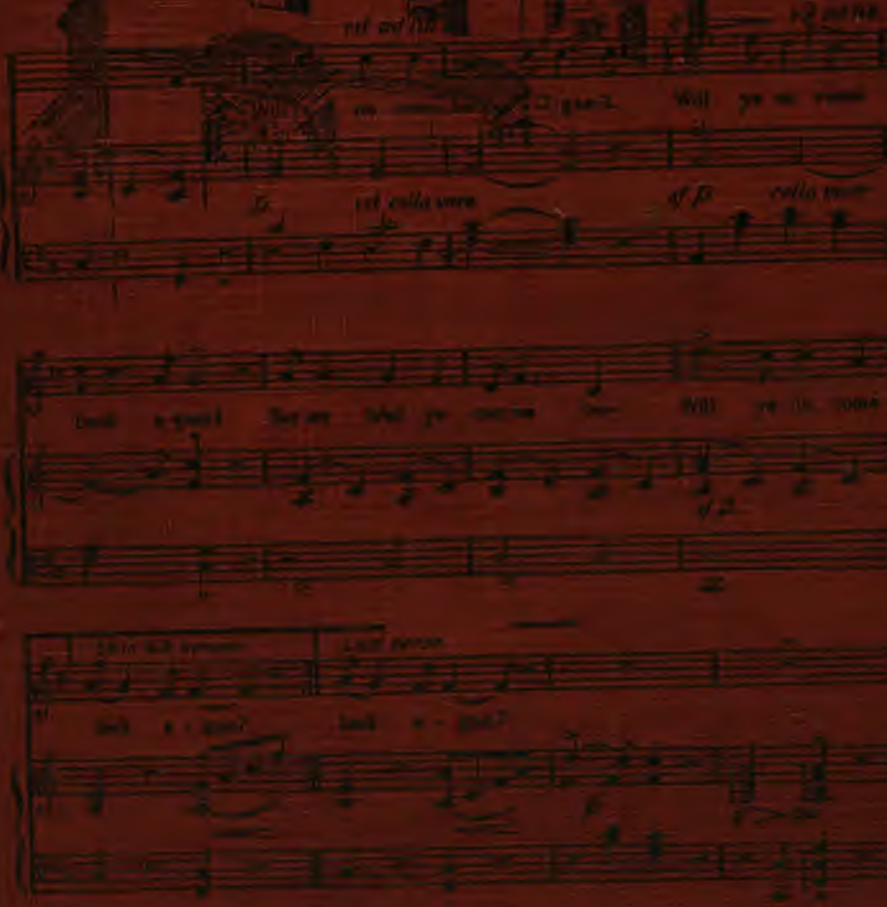
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 07490205 1

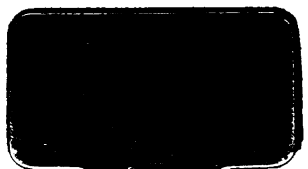
CALL OF THE BELLS



EDMUND MITCHELL

1. No subject

*41



NCW
Mitchell

COURTESY OF SUNSET MAGAZINE

"There fell upon his ears the sound of distant bells—soft distant bells."—page 30.

THE
CALL OF THE BELLS

A NOVEL BY EDMUND MITCHELL

Author of Towards the Eternal Snows,
Tales of Destiny, Etc.

FRONTISPIECE BY MAYNARD DIXON
COVER BY H. W. MACLELLAN

MENZIES PUBLISHING COMPANY, Inc.
175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.

1916

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
352091B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
B 1946 L

Copyright by
Menzies Publishing Company, Inc.
1916

CONTENTS

BOOK I—THE HOBO

CHAPTER		
I.	THE CAMPING GROUND	3
II.	PARTINGS IN THE NIGHT	11
III.	IN THE DEPTHS	19
IV.	THE WOLF OF HUNGER	26
V.	THE FUGITIVE	34
VI.	WITHIN THE FOLD	41
VII.	GETHSEMANE	48
VIII.	FOOTSTEPS RETRACED	53
IX.	THE HAND OF THE LAW	65
X.	TEMPERING THE STEEL	72

BOOK II—THE WORKER

CHAPTER		
I.	AWAITING THE ABSENT ONE	85
II.	A GOOD SAMARITAN	90
III.	FIRST INFLUENCES	98
IV.	THE COFFEE CLUB	106
V.	A NEW DEPARTURE	110
VI.	IRRECONCILABLE	119
VII.	BY THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW	134
VIII.	THE JUBILEE SINGERS	143
IX.	"ALL IS WELL SINCE ALL GROWS BETTER"	149
X.	BONDS AND THE MAN	157
XI.	THE TORMENT OF TANTALUS	168
XII.	MISSION BELLS	181
XIII.	IN SECRET CONCLAVE	192
XIV.	A KNOTTY PROBLEM	202
XV.	REUNION	216
XVI.	HEART CONFIDENCES	229

BOOK III—THE LEADER

CHAPTER		
I.	INSTILLING THE POISON	239
II.	JEALOUS PANGS	249
III.	THE TIGHTENING HAND	257
IV.	THE GAGE OF BATTLE	266
V.	THE LAW OF THE COMPROMISE	275
VI.	DISASTER	288
VII.	DISTRUST	297
VIII.	DAWNING LIGHT	306
IX.	AT GRIPS	312
X.	THE SHADOW OF THE PAST	326
XI.	THE BOMB THAT FAILED	338
XII.	DENOUNCED	345
XIII.	IN THE PIT OF HIS OWN DIGGING	352
XIV.	THE YEGGMAN OF FINANCE	360
XV.	THE MOB	370
XVI.	THE TEMPLE OF LABOR	383
XVII.	PRIDE CONQUERS PRIDE	395
XVIII.	THE WHISTLE BLOWS	406

BOOK I

THE HOBO

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll:
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."

CHAPTER I

THE CAMPING GROUND

Not a breath of wind stirred. From the pitiless steel-blue sky, unbroken from horizon to horizon by even the fleck of a cloud that might have given promise of relief for the morrow, blazed the sunshine of a midsummer afternoon on the Colorado desert. The heat haze clothed the face of the landscape as with a mantle of gossamer that blurred the outlines of shrub and rock and the distant profile of encompassing mountains. Every living thing had disappeared; even the restless black beetles of the sand ruts had sought siesta in shadowed and hidden places. The stillness was intense. No sound, no movement anywhere; all nature drowsed as by an opiate into somnolence!

"Gee! but it has been hot."

The exclamation came from a man who had crawled from underneath a camping wagon and drawn himself erect on the shady side of the canvas canopy. His garments were khaki trousers and shirt of the same material, open at the neck. He was tall, lean of figure and of face, straight as a gun barrel, sun-browned, clear-eyed, young.

"Texas ain't in it with this," he continued, in murmured soliloquy, as he fanned himself with a somewhat tattered straw sombrero, and bestowed a comprehensive glance on his surroundings.

The man stood within a palisaded enclosure. On his

left hand was a low building—of weather-boarding, with shingle roof, unpainted, out of repair, its purposes sufficiently indicated by the rudely lettered sign running the length of the porch: "Hotel. General Merchandise, Water and Feed. Camping Ground for Travelers." Facing him, over the palisade, was a double line of cottonwoods, straggling along at irregular intervals and obviously following the course of an irrigation ditch; beneath their taller growth a clump of pepper-trees, crouching low, as this immigrant among desert trees has learned to crouch, so that delicate roots may be kept cool by the leafy shade of wide-spread branches. To the right the eye fell only on the scrub of the desert—sagebrush, greasewood, dwarf mesquite, cacti of a dozen kinds, varying in shape and size but all alike armed with the sharp spikes or barbed hooks that defy their enemies and so perpetuate their kind despite the grim desert struggle for existence.

The Texan, facing the east, was contemplating the last stage of the long road he had traveled, the valley of Coachella, dotted with homes and orchards and fields of green alfalfa, watered by a hundred gushing artesian wells, an oasis of productivity wrested from the grip of the wilderness by man's courage and perseverance.

He now stepped round the wagon, and, shading his eyes from the glare of the westering sun, gazed over the final twenty-mile sweep of desert—billowing sand-dunes, heat-blistered patches of adobe, scraggy scrub, an expanse of desiccation and desolation, with mountain ranges north and south gradually drawing together until the mighty twin peaks of San Gorgonio and San Jacinto stand face to face, sentinels of the last narrow gateway that passes the pilgrim from the parched Sahara of America into the garden lands of California.

The goal of his journeying, as the keen, eager look in the searching eyes declared! The sun was just touching the pine-fringed crest of San Jacinto range.

"Thank God, it will be cool now in half an hour," he mused, as his eyes dropped from mountain peak to sand plain. "Hope the team will make this last stretch all right. Looks as if there will be hard pulling, though, across all that sand."

Meanwhile another man, awakened from afternoon siesta, had appeared beyond the palisade that marked the precincts of the hotel camping ground. He too had crawled from shaded retreat—from under the peppers whose umbrageous boughs dipped down into the very sand and formed a natural tent of cool greenery. The newcomer on the scene, as he emerged into the full glare of the sunlight, blinked his eyes like a bewildered owl, then covered them for a moment with his hand. He was a young man, somewhat above medium height, with stalwart, well-proportioned figure, set off not unbecomingly by the simple desert costume of trousers, belt, shirt, and red handkerchief knotted around the throat. But the face, with its stubbly growth of beard and unkempt locks to which leaves and twigs were adhering, declared the hobo—the homeless wanderer, lost to the refining influences of life in the community of self-respecting fellow-men.

The hobo threw a glance west, just to satisfy himself that the sun was sinking behind the mountain range and that the worst heat of the day had passed. He saw the tall figure of the Texan beside his camping wagon, but paid no further heed to outfit or owner.

Squatting on the shady side of the pepper-trees, he proceeded to roll a cigarette, then reached forth a dry stick and thrust it into a heap of white ashes. There had been no sign of fire here before, but now with the stirring of the ashes a thin blue vapor ascended from slumbering embers below.

The hobo withdrew the now glowing stick, applied it to his cigarette, and, with hands locked across his knees, puffed away complacently.

The perfume of the tobacco seemed to have awakened another sleeper.

"What's the time?" cried a voice from beneath the pepper boughs.

"Near sundown," was the smoker's curt response.

A few minutes later the leaves again parted, and from under the trees crept a second man. In general appearance he was much like the other—he too bore the unmistakable brand of the social castaway. But he had a full beard, and was older, perhaps by twenty years.

"Well, kiddo, I'm hungry. How do you feel?"

This was the last comer's greeting.

"It's too hot to eat yet," was the reply, given without upraising of the eyes or change of attitude.

"Wal, it ain't too hot for a drink, anyhow."

Saying this, the older man reached a hand among the foliage and produced therefrom first a battered tin canteen and then a black quart bottle. He took a long pull at the latter, followed by a chaser of water, and finally passed both bottle and canteen to his companion.

The younger man, after partaking of the proffered drink, smoked on. But he was more alert now; he began to feel for, and pick, the sticks and leaves from his tousled hair. Meanwhile the other hobo had bestowed the wet goods in the cool hiding place from which they had been drawn.

"I tell you, it's a cinch," he resumed, as he proceeded to scrape out the bowl of a briar root pipe with a broken knife blade. "The man's lying dead drunk at the back of his store. We can swipe all the grub and booze we'll want for days, and a good bunch of swag besides. And it'll be an easy get-away, as three or four freights will be pulling out to-night after the mail goes through."

"I won't steal. I said it before, and I say it now."

As he gave this quick and firm rejoinder, the young hobo tossed away the stub of his cigarette and rose to

his feet. He stretched his arms vigorously to either side, bending his elbows several times, limbering muscles in which an athlete might have taken pride, and diplaying a big broad chest that suggested latent physical strength more convincing still than spoken words.

The older man watched the play of thews and sinews with a smile that was half envious, half contemptuous. "He could throw a steer, mebbe, but he ain't got the courage of a louse"—this was the muttered thought in his heart, although prudence forbade its utterance. The moment being unfavorable for pressing the argument, he gave a shifty glance around.

"Someone's coming," he said, pointing with his pipe stem to a cloud of dust hovering over the trail from the east. The young hobo stood still, his eyes taking the indicated direction.

A few minutes later two men, driving a pair of horses hitched to a light rig, passed at a distance of fifty yards and swung into the hotel enclosure. The hobos from their sheltered place of observation among the pepper-trees continued to watch, with listless interest; anything was a diversion in such a God-forsaken solitude.

"You must have had a hot drive," said the Texan, approaching the new arrivals, who had jumped down from the buckboard. Men, horses and rig were all alike smothered in the gray dust of the desert.

"Pretty hot the last ten miles," was the answer. "But we came down from the mountains. It's not so bad up there."

The speaker was shaking the long brown linen duster that completely enveloped his figure. From this he emerged, wonderfully spick and span. He was a middle-aged man, bronzed and bearded, his face determined and serious, yet kindly withal. His companion, at the hazard of a guess, looked to be a miner or a ranch hand.

"You get water, Jack, and I'll unhitch the team," said the leader of the twain.

The Texan advanced to the horses, and with swift, skilled fingers assisted in unbuckling the harness.

"For Los Angeles?" asked the newcomer, glancing at the camping wagon.

"Yep. Been down in Imperial, trying to get some teaming. But didn't make good."

"Imperial's all right, isn't it?"

"You bet. Never saw such alfalfa or Kafir-corn in my life. But I made an error of judgment. There's no work there for a hired team, so I lost my time and money by thinking that a new country like that was the same as Texas."

"Then you have overlanded from Texas?"

"Yes, with my wife and kiddie in our prairie-schooner. They're asleep inside," he added, at the other's inquiring look. "Been tough on them, Imperial in the summer time and without enough money to flag a bread wagon. But we'll be all right in Los Angeles; her sister's there."

The Texan had been giving his simple story with a half-amused smile at the family misadventures. He led the horses under a brushwood shelter thatched with palm fronds, where his own pair were haltered, with two or three shaggy-coated burros sharing the shade and the companionship and patiently awaiting the chance of a few stray wisps of fodder at supper time. He took one of the buckets from the man who had been to fill them.

"That's enough just now," he said, when the animals had thirstily siphoned the water. "Have you hay with you?"

"No, we're taking on a bale here," answered the man. "There it comes," he went on, as a youth trundling a barrow loaded with a bale of alfalfa hay emerged from the store that formed a wing of the so-called "Hotel."

The Texan rejoined the man at the buck-board.

"Can I help you?" he asked, as the latter proceeded to lift some sacks to the ground.

"Thank you," he replied. "This ore is pretty heavy, and I want to get at the grub box."

"Been mining?"

"Sampling a mine, up in the Twenty-Nine Palms district."

"Any good?"

"Great gold country, but patchy. Rich pockets, and some payable ledges if the water difficulty can be solved. No, thanks; don't unstrap the bedding. We're going to make Palm Springs to-night, and will hit the trail again as soon as the horses are rested and the moon is up. Supper will look good now," he added, as with a laugh he lifted a big frying-pan from the top of the box in which sundry packages of provisions were stowed.

Almost at the same moment a call came from the interior of the tent wagon. The Texan moved away in answer to the summons, and a minute later lifted to the ground the light figure of a woman, and then a child. The mining man, with unobtrusive but kindly interest, glanced at the family group. It was a pathetic little picture—the tall gaunt young teamster; the pale-faced, fragile woman, wilted, as anyone could see, by the oven-like heat of the day that had passed; the tiny tot of a girl in a single garment of blue and white gingham, pale and anemic like her mother, clinging to the latter's skirt as she shyly peeped at the strangers.

Outside the palisade the elder hobo had duly labeled the new campers with the certitude of long experience.

"Mining men," he said, as he turned to collect some blackened empty tin cans and arrange them among the hot wood ashes as an improvised fireplace for the preparation of the evening meal.

The burnished disc of the sun had disappeared behind the lofty range of San Jacinto. There was still a full hour of sunshine in the valleys and on the coast-belt lands beyond the barrier. But here at the edge of the desert, under the shadow of the encircling mountains, it was already evening; the soft heliotrope-tinged twilight, deepening to purple, had come in grateful succession to the daytime glare; a faint breeze was rustling the leaves of cottonwoods and peppers; the black beetles were afoot in their legion, industriously traveling along the wheel ruts in the sand, why and whither God alone could tell; an alert little lizard, with beadlike eyes, was watching the hobos from a discreet distance and close to the sure retreat of a gopher hole; the sharp ping of a dragonfly's wings now and then smote the ear; all of a sudden the shrill chirruping of locusts amid the tree foliage filled the air; and from beyond the hotel, in the switching yard of the last station on the desert where freight trains are broken and made up, came the snort of an awakened locomotive, the measured clang of its bell, and the occasional directing cry of one of the switchmen.

By insensible degrees the shadows deepened. It was night upon the desert, moonless as yet, the stars shining bright through the clear atmosphere. Three ruddy fires glowed upon the camping ground, two within the guaranteed limits of respectability, one, that of the hobos, outside the pale.

CHAPTER II

PARTINGS IN THE NIGHT

"Jack, for God's sake slip back to the butcher's and get another big porterhouse. That poor family over there haven't the makings of a square meal. Hurry up; I'll attend to this."

And the mining expert took the sizzling frying-pan, with its appetizing odors of beefsteak in process of cooking, from his companion's hand.

For some time he had been furtively watching the wife of the Texan in her preparations for the family supper. He had seen the mixing of a thin batter, the production from the wagon of a small can of maple syrup, the boiling of a coffee pot—but that was all.

A few minutes later the messenger had returned with a second generous slab of beefsteak.

"We're having a little birthday party to-night, my mate and I," said the mining expert, as he approached the Texan, frying-pan in hand. "This steak is for you, brother; we've got another ready for the pan. My regards, missus," he went on, with a cheerful and courteous nod that permitted of no refusal. "Where is your spider?"

Without waiting for an answer, he seized the family frying-pan, in which an attenuated flapjack was cooking, and by dexterous juxtaposition had in a trice transferred beefsteak, gravy, potatoes and onions on top of the half-stiff batter.

"I see you've got the Yorkshire pudding all ready," he added, with a laugh, as he dropped his hand and let the empty frying-pan hang by his side.

The Texan had risen from the up-ended cracker box on which he had been seated For a moment his eyes looked straight into those of the mining man.

"It will taste good to them," murmured the latter, directing the other's attention toward wife and child.

There was a quiver on the Texan's face, but he simply reached forth his hand and said: "You're mighty kind."

"It's my birthday, you know," continued the expert. "And when Jack gets the other steak ready we'll come over here, by your leave, and all have our supper together."

"Let us share this one, then—and the Yorkshire pudding," suggested the woman timidly, but with a wan, sweet smile. "The other can be cooking meanwhile."

"Right you are," came the jovial assent. "And I'll carve."

So the sputtering spider was straightway set upon the tailboard of the wagon, and in short time the man addressed as Jack was transferring to the same convenient serving place bottles of Worcestershire sauce and tomato ketchup, sundry cans of fruit and condensed cream, a big loaf of bread, and an apple pie of proper birthday dimensions, which, with quick appreciation of the situation, he had brought back, when fetching the steak, from the buffet at the railway station.

It was the happiest birthday dinner the mining expert could remember, and it falls only to royalty, or to delicate hospitality such as his, to have two birthday banquets in the passing of a single year.

Meanwhile the hobos, too, were feasting. They also had a succulent beefsteak deftly grilled on wooden spits resting upon the blackened cans set among the wood

ashes, in which a bunch of goodly sized potatoes were baking in their jackets. And while the desert tramps ate, the whisky bottle passed from hand to hand, the older man plying the younger with frequent potations.

"It's dead easy," he said. "I swiped that bottle right under his nose, and there's more where it came from. In another hour the limited will go through, and the track'll be clear for freight."

The young hobo sat silent. But he no longer protested that he would never steal; and the seasoned yeggman took this as a good omen, and passed the bottle yet again.

The little girl, comfortably fed for the first time in many days, was nestling on the knees of the mining expert.

"Sing to me, mammy, and play the guitar," she said, looking over to her mother's face lit up by happiness and by the flickering firelight.

"Not to-night, dearest," was the quiet answer.

"Why, mammy? To-night's the best night of all. I's so happy!" And she cuddled closer to her new friend.

There were blushing protests, but the birthday party was not to be denied, and the tall Texan had to go to the tent wagon and produce from its depths a cheap and battered old guitar. Then into the stillness of the night there rose a quaint little tinkling of strings, accompanying a sweet, although untrained and at times broken, woman's voice, as she sang the child's favorite song, a ditty in negro dialect that every few lines came round with the refrain, "Yo' po' li'l' lamb!"

It lasted only a minute or two, but at the close of the song the child was asleep against the breast of the mining expert. There was the glisten of tears in his eyes as he handed the tiny unconscious form into the Texan's outstretched arms. The guitar had been laid aside.

"Poor wee tired mite!" murmured the expert. "She's had her lullaby song."

"Come to your bed, my dearie," whispered the mother, bending over her babe.

"We'll return after the mail train goes through," said the miner to the Texan. "Good night, little maid, and a gold-piece for birthday luck," he said, as he kissed the forehead of the sleeping child and pressed a coin between her tiny fingers. "Hurry up, Jack!" he cried, in a brusque tone, addressing his mate. "You know we've got to get that letter on the Limited."

And the two men strode into the darkness of the night.

"Hell, let's get away from this!" muttered the yeggman, his hand roughly grasping the young hobo's shoulder. "It makes me tired."

The two outcasts, drawn from their drinking bout by the jingle of the guitar, had crept close to the palisade, and, peering between the stakes, had witnessed the whole scene.

"Ain't it sickening, ain't it maudlin?" resumed the speaker, as he led his companion back to their own fire. "There's still another swig apiece, and that's enough for both of us before the night's work. You can watch outside, kid, and I'll do the job."

Not a word came in response.

"If you ain't game for this," went on the yeggman, a note of menace now in his voice, "remember what I warned you. I'll make life hell for you wherever you go in California. Speak, won't you? Speak!"

"I'm going to sleep for an hour or two. Wake me when I'm wanted."

With these words, the young hobo crawled on hands and knees into the darkness of the sheltering pepper-trees.

There was no letter for the night mail, but the mining men put in an hour at the village store in buying bacon, sugar, coffee and other supplies for the replenishment of their grub box.

The express train came gliding down the long incline from Palm Springs, and then, after ten minutes of bustle at the depot—passengers promenading and breathing the cool night air, a few lonesome packages dropped by the way, two or three flabby mail sacks exchanged—was again speeding eastward, into the depths of the Colorado desert. The sprinkling of local residents had had their evening dissipation in seeing the mail go through, and had scattered to their homes. The full moon had risen from down the Coachella valley, and was bathing with its silvery effulgence the spectral sand-dunes stretching toward the sentinel peaks at the gateway of the desert. The night was still and silent, save for the waving of signal-lanterns in the switching yard, the clangor for brief intervals of the locomotive bell, or the occasional metallic clank of automatic couplings when a freight car ran into its appointed place.

"It's heavy sand from here to Palm Springs," said the mining expert to the Texan, as together they hitched the former's team. "We can't carry that broken bale of hay, or that half sack of barley. So you'd as well use them."

"Well, my horses ain't in too good condition," said the teamster, half pleased, half reluctant to accept.

"Take my advice. Spell them for another day, and give them a good feed of grain. Then travel to-morrow night by moonlight, and, with a stop-off for water at Indian Well, you'll make Palm Springs in one stage, and be in the San Bernardino valley by the day after."

The horses were now harnessed and ready for the road. The sacks of ore had been stowed under the seat of the buckboard, the dishes and cooking utensils all prop-

erly packed, and every part of the load securely roped. But the grub box still lay on the sand.

"Can't take it, boss," remarked Jack, the expert's companion. "If we're to go right through Palm Springs to Banning, as you've just decided, every pound will tell."

"Then leave it," replied the expert. "I guess your missus can make some use of these odds and ends. Good-by, brother, and good luck to you all. Kiss the little girl for me in the morning."

A hearty hand grip, and then with a grinding swish of wheels in deep sand the miners' rig had driven away into the night beyond the sheltering cottonwoods.

The tall Texan dimly understood it all. A single glance at the overflowing grocery box had showed him that there was food in plenty for his family until the end of the long trail to Los Angeles. The three-parts-filled sack of barley was a godsend for his emaciated horses. He had been skimping them on his last remaining bale of hay, and how to procure the next supply had up to now been an unsolvable problem.

He gave his horses a midnight feed of the barley, and spared a few generous handfuls of hay for the vagrant burros nosing among the litter of the departed team for stray straws and spilled grain. Then he dragged the bale and the sack and the box of provisions under his wagon, and spread his sleeping canvas and blankets beside the precious store for man and beast that had so providentially come his way.

"By the Lord, they would have called it a miracle in the olden days," he murmured, as he gazed up into the stars.

On hands and knees beyond the palisade the old yeggman was searching for his missing comrade amid the darkness of the drooping pepper boughs.

"I'll give him hell!" he muttered again and again. "The low-down bum to have sneaked away!"

In the railroad yard a long freight train, thirty cars or more, was ready for departure, westward bound. In front were two locomotives, with a third behind, to help push up the heavy grade. The yard crew and the train brakemen were making a systematic examination under every car, probing with sticks, flashing the light of lanterns among springs and cross rods. Some three or four miserable specimens of humanity had been dragged forth, and cuffed and buffeted out of the yard.

But the young hobo, comrade of the yeggman, was not among these discovered delinquents.

At last the train was ready to pull out. The whistle of the head locomotive sent a prolonged and melancholy shriek into the desert night; its bell swung and clanged in sonorous and monotonous warning; then all three engines, already feeling the grade, snorted and panted as the long line of heavily loaded cars began to move.

The train had attained a good speed, when out from the shadow of some palm trees planted at the end of the depot there darted the figure of a man, who made a grab at a passing box-car, and with one light, easy movement, half-run, half-swing, threw himself in among the rods.

"Great guns, he made it!" exclaimed a switchman, half in anger, half in admiration. When the train had swept on its way, he advanced a few paces and threw the rays of his lantern over the patches of black shadow cast by the palm trees on the track.

But if he was looking for a mangled corpse, he found none. When the searcher raised his eyes the three red rear lights of the freight train were twinkling distant stars, and the impatient, spasmodic throbbing of the locomotives had dulled to a continuous and muffled murmur fading away into the brooding silence of the wilderness.

The young hobo, debased, disgraced, but with the one surviving spark of manhood in his breast that forbade him to become a thief, that had made him strong enough at last to break the bonds of association with a thief, was safely on his way—out of the desert of desolation toward the narrow mountain portal of the promised land.

Partings in the night—the hobo holding the rods of a freight car, the mining expert guiding his horses over the moonlit sands, the Texan left to thankful slumber beneath his camping wagon, each taking his own path and destined never on this earth to meet again! Yet in the mysterious workings of fate had the brief contact of these three lives set in motion forces, subtle and as yet almost imperceptible, the ultimate consequences of which no man could foretell.

CHAPTER III

IN THE DEPTHS

Dazed, trembling in every limb, sand and grit in his hair and eyes, in every pore of his skin, and in every mesh of his garments, the young hobo crawled out from among the rods of the box-car to which all night long he had clung, despite many a bump and jar, with the sullen pertinacity of a treed and hunted and hiding bear. His legs were numbed, his fingers stiffened; his vision was blurred, and in his ears still reverberated the remorseless thud, thud, thud of revolving wheels.

He drew himself erect, loosened the joints of his hands by opening and closing them several times, and began to look around. His first glance was along the train by which he had traveled. Only one engine now, he noted, for they had been running down grade for an hour or more. A brakeman was approaching, surveying with cold, contemptuous glance the forlorn and begrimed figure of the man who, despite the vigilance of train crew and yard crew, had stolen a ride from the desert to which, like the coyotes and the rattlers, he properly belonged. There was no menace in the brakeman's eye—what was done was done, and the free transportation could not be recalled. He showed just the scornful indifference of the honest worker toward the degraded vagabond. His look was utterly compassionless, because

the object contemplated was merely the familiar type of human vermin which it was his daily and disagreeable task to pick from secretive nooks and fling away as far as possible.

Yet with the apathetic disdain there was tolerance; for while the wage-earner believed that it would be better for the decent part of society to crush such parasitic creatures once and for all under a remorseless heel, he was compelled to recognize that even they were protected by the sacred and eternal law, "Thou shalt not kill."

So no word of recrimination or abuse fell from the brakeman's lips. But under his stony stare the hobo slunk away, round a line of freight cars standing on a siding.

On the further side were others of his kind, routed by the breaking dawn from the shelter of outhouses, or ordered stacks of railroad ties, or clumps of brush under the lee of which they had passed the night, moving about aimlessly to revive chilled and torpid circulation, furtively to escape attention—flitting figures that loomed through the tenuous mist of the morning like living ghosts of dead souls.

The hobo from the desert sought no companionship of his fellows—he kept slinking on, round the office and waiting-room of a wayside railway station, and into the silent, slumbering streets of a village beyond. He paused under the verandah of a weather-board shack, by the doorway of which was inscribed the word "Saloon." From out the sandpits of his eyes his blurred vision read the word again and again. With trembling hand he reached for the knob of the door; he turned and rattled it—once, twice. The door was locked. He sat him down, on the sidewalk of hard-baked adobe, his back against the weather-boards, right beneath the talismanic sign—"Saloon."

The hobo waited. A swift glance up and down the deserted street assured him that he was alone and unob-

served. He drew one knee up to his chin, and, inserting a finger and thumb into the lining of his shoe, pulled forth a creased and sticky dollar bill. He spread it out before him for an instant, then folded it several times, till it was but a tiny pad. This pad he rammed into the hollowed palm of one hand, and the hand he pressed tight to his breast, while yet he waited.

The last fleecy wisps of mist were being licked up by the now risen sun when the hobo started to his feet. His quick ear had caught the sound of a shuffling footstep within the saloon, and a minute later came the grating of a key in the lock. The door was flung open, and the hobo drew deep into his lungs the wafted fragrance of spilled beer and spirituous fumes. He made a forward lurch.

But the fat paunch of the saloon-keeper filled the doorway.

"Clear out of this, you bum!" he cried, with foot drawn back to administer the physical impulse that might be required to enforce the peremptory command.

The hobo unclenched his hand, unfolded the dollar bill, and raised appealing eyes.

"Oh, you've got the price of a drink, have you?" remarked the saloon-keeper, in a sneering tone that verged toward complacency. "Where did you steal it?"

The hobo made no reply. But the corpulent form no longer blocked the entry, and the nerve-shaken, thirsty waif sifted in.

"Rye," was all he said, as he ranged himself against the bar.

The saloon-keeper, now on the opposite side of the counter, was critically examining the dollar bill. The scrutiny proved satisfactory, for he swung from the shelf behind him a squat brown bottle and set a little glass beside it. The bottle rattled against the rim of the glass as the hobo's unsteady hand proceeded to decant the liquor.

"What's the cost of a drink in California?" he asked, in a subdued way, as he poured tremblingly but intently careful not to spill.

"So you've just blown in, have you?" commented the saloon-man, who had meanwhile placed a tumbler of water beside the liquor glass. "Well, the price of case goods in this neck of the woods and at this hour in the morning is two bits a shot, I reckon. But I suppose you are figgering that whisky may come cheaper if you take it wholesale," he added, sweeping the bottle out of the hobo's hand.

But the glass was already filled to the brim. The befogged brain of the hobo was impervious to the shaft of sarcasm, and was past the stage of resenting an insult. But it was measuring the distance between glass and lips, and counting the hazard of a quivering hand. The problem was quickly solved. The hobo unknotted the red handkerchief at his throat, pressed the one end against the glass as he grasped the latter with his right hand, and then, hauling with his left hand on the other end of the improvised pulley belt still resting on his neck, slowly but steadily conveyed the liquor to his mouth without a single drop being spilt. With a sigh of relief, he set down the empty glass, then reached for the tumbler and sent the cold water after the burning rye.

The saloon-keeper watched the performance of this mechanical feat with professional interest.

"Wipe your chin," he called out in peremptory and mocking tone.

With dull comprehension the hobo obeyed, slowly drawing the back of his hand across his stubbly beard, and then looking on the hand for the offending moisture. There was none. The saloon-man laughed aloud—a coarse, brutal laugh. But the victim of the joke remained all unconscious that in point of fact a delicate compliment had been passed on his ingenuity and skill.

He looked dumbly at the saloon-man once again, and into the latter's eyes there stole just a glimmer of pity. None better than he knew the sufferings of the poor devil at the other side of the counter.

"Guess you were feeling pretty bad," he remarked, in a conciliatory tone, as his hand reached to the cash-register.

Conscience must have momentarily smitten him, for he rang up only fifteen cents, the accustomed price of his trade. But his fingers lingered over the eighty-five cents of change taken from the nest of little drawers. With his disengaged hand he cleared away the glasses.

"This is the last wet town on the road," he continued, with thoughtful communicativeness. "And a month from now this little burg too goes dry—damn those local option elections!"

There was bitterness now in his tone, and a resentful glare in his eyes as he cast a glance around the saloon, appraising the depreciated value of gimcrack mirrors, brass-bound kegs and other fixings. Angrily he slapped down the change on the counter—the near side of the counter, his hand still covering the coins. Again his look fastened on the forlorn customer, and his voice resumed its ingratiating accents.

"Not another drink, old man, till you hit Los Angeles."

"How far?" asked the hobo. The whisky had done its immediate work of recuperation; he stood erect now, and looked more of a man.

"Oh, some fifty-odd miles. And you've got to hoof it. No break-beam rides in the San Ber'doo valley."

His fingers were still toying with the half dollar, quarter, and dime, bunching them in a little heap after they had been spread out upon the counter.

"Fifty miles and not a drink?" murmured the hobo incredulously.

"Yep"—it was a chirrupy voice now, and the change

began to move lingeringly across the counter. "Chaps that have got the dough stock up here goin' through. That's good old rye I keep—dollar twenty-five the bottle."

The hobo looked ruefully in the direction of his money. "I haven't another red cent," he exclaimed, raising his eyes to the saloon-keeper's.

"Well, you look a decent sort, though a bit battered by the road. You can have a bottle for the eighty-five."

With a swift sweep of the hand the change came back. The register bell rang again, and the coins tinkled one by one into their proper compartments.

"There, I'll draw the cork for you," continued the now genial saloon-man, suiting the action to the word. "And if you take my tip you'll stow that bottle out of sight. There's always a score of yeggmen bumming around this town, and if they know you're stocked up they'll pounce on you like buzzards on a dead sheep."

Without a word the hobo removed his coat, placed the bottle in one of its pockets, and slung the garment across his arm.

"I see you are up to the game, pal. Well, beat it now. There'll be my regular customers coming along soon."

And a wave of the hand toward the doorway sent the impossible and now penniless derelict into the roadway.

"When he gets through with that bottle he'll be about paralyzed," remarked the saloon-keeper to himself, as he damped a cloth under a faucet and proceeded to wipe from the counter the liquor stains of the previous night.

The hobo, carefully nursing the coat upon his arm, cast an uneasy look up and down the street. He saw that it paralleled the railway.

"He'll be coming down the line on the next freight," was the dumb tenor of his thoughts. "He said he would make it hell for me. And he sure will, if he ever catches up with me again. It's the cross-country road for me."

Braced and active now, walking with a swinging stride,

the hobo cut across the railroad tracks and took the first turning to the south, out over the broad sun-kissed valley, past fields of lush alfalfa and orchards with pretty homes nested amidst their greenery. But his deadened brain was incapable of appreciating either the warm morning sunshine that bathed him or the manifold beauties that encompassed him on every side. Fleeing when no man pursued, whither he did not know, he had bartered the last friend that might have aided him for the very enemy that would of a surety lead to his further undoing—a good dollar bill for a bottle of bad rye.

CHAPTER IV

THE WOLF OF HUNGER

Night had fallen over the city of Riverside. The street lights were aglow. Shopkeepers stood at their doors, throngs of saunterers passed along the sidewalks. Everyone was enjoying the cool evening air after a hot day.

Just beyond the main thoroughfare, in a quiet and dark side street, stood the young hobo. He hesitated before venturing into the glare of the electric lights, among the well-dressed crowd from which he dully realized he was a pariah. He still carried his coat slung across one arm. But the bottle was not half so heavy now as in the morning. His limbs trembled beneath him, partly from the effects of the liquor, partly from want of food. For he had not eaten since the night before—since his last meal with the yeggman on the desert; and hunger was gnawing like a wolf at his vitals.

The outcast kept close to the dark black shadow of a cypress hedge. In this hedge were several breaks, where the foliage had suffered some blighting touch and turned brown. All of a sudden, through one of these openings close to the hobo, there shot a shaft of light. He turned and peered through the crevice.

From a French window beyond a stretch of lawn came the flood of luminosity. The glass doors were wide open, the shades undrawn. Within could be seen the

figure of a man. He had just turned on the electric lights and was moving swiftly to and fro.

The hobo watched, at first with sluggish but soon with quickened interest. He saw the man divest himself of a flannel jacket, hang the garment over the back of a chair, and then, reaching into the hip pocket of the white trousers he was wearing, toss on to a side table a heavily weighted purse. In the tense stillness of the night the watcher heard the unmistakable thud of the leather-covered coins; and there before his hungry eyes lay the purse, within a hand reach of the open window.

For a few minutes the figure disappeared into an inner room, and then returned garbed in evening dress. The changer of raiment was evidently in a hurry, for, as he came into sight, he was still in the act of buttoning his waistcoat across the snow-white expanse of shirt front. He advanced to the chair on which the discarded tennis jacket hung and drew from its breast pocket a gold watch and fob. While arranging these, he raised his disengaged hand to the electric switch close by the door.

All was in darkness again. The shaft of light through the broken cypress hedge had disappeared. The outline of the French casement was only dimly visible in the starlight to the eyes that still peered intently across the lawn. But in the blackness beyond that open window, on the table within the stretch of an arm, lay the forgotten purse of money. The hobo knew it—his very bowels yearned at the knowledge.

For a brief space of time there was a terrible struggle against the temptation. Every fiber of the man's being quivered; he felt the beads of perspiration on his brow. Even when brutalized with drink the night before on the desert camping ground he had declared that he would not steal—that he would never become a thief. But he was fed then, while now he was famished—weak from the want of food.

There was no search for a gateway—head and shoulders just forced themselves through one of the rotten patches in the hedge. Crouched like a four-footed beast, the hobo crept across the lawn. With swift certitude of distance and direction, his arm reached into the darkness of the room.

A minute later, the purse in his hand, his hand concealed in the folds of the coat he carried, the young hobo was fleeing along the side street, away from the lights of the crowded thoroughfare, hugging the shadow of garden shrubs and foliage trees, making for the open country whence he had come. For a mile or more he ran, throwing glances to right or left, frightened at the sound of his own stealthy footfalls. His breath came quicker, and at last his pace slackened. First fears had passed; he knew he was alone—in the silent solitude and unpursued. He left the highway and buried himself in the darkness of a clump of gum trees.

At last he was a thief, a self-branded thief, and the consciousness of his final fall had made him a more sober man, or a less drunk man, than he had been for many long days before—even one brief half hour before. His hand was still tightly clenched over the purse of soft leather. There were only a few coins inside, dollars by their size, although strangely heavy for silver pieces. But it was too dark to examine them, and he was afraid to strike a match lest it might prove a guiding beacon to possible pursuers.

At the thought he strained his ears in listening. Not a sound but the stirring of the breeze among the eucalyptus leaves!

The young hobo reached beneath his coat for the whisky bottle; took a deep draught, and sat down, his back against a tree trunk. By the mere thought of possession the wolf of hunger within him was momentarily appeased, and with a little laugh he defied alike the pricking of conscience and the dread of capture.

He would rest a while, then go back to town and seek a square meal, in the Chinese quarter where the coming of such a one as he would be unobserved. For he had been told by his yeggman comrade on the overland trail that every California town had a Chinese quarter, and that it was there the fallen ones made their haunts —it would have been mockery to have said their homes.

Yes, it would be all right. In an hour at most he would eat. Meanwhile, another drink would taste good. So he drank again.

He had courage now to open the purse. He wanted the assurance that the coins were genuine "bucks." In a trice he had them in his hand—unseen in the black darkness, but there right in the hollow of his hand. Three dollars! God! It was a little enough sum for which to have bartered the last remaining vestige of his self-respect and manhood.

All at once a strange terror smote his heart. The coins were much heavier than silver dollars. He had never seen a twenty-dollar gold-piece—it was greenbacks that had circulated in his far-away home town. But he knew that such coins were the accustomed currency of the Pacific Coast. And terror smote him, not because sixty dollars might be his, the product of his act of theft, but because he, a hobo, now a criminal hobo, a yeggman, and a stranger in a new place, could not dare to change a twenty-dollar gold piece except in some known and safe resort of thieves.

And the wolf of hunger was gnawing again. He felt faint. With hand that trembled he sought for and found a match in the breast pocket of his shirt. Daring all, he lighted it against the tree stem.

Great God! Under the glare of the feeble torch the heavy dollar-sized coins gave back a sickly yellow gleam. The expiring match dropped from nerveless fingers.

The thief was richer by far than he had at first

counted, but he was poorer than the street beggar with only a nickel dropped into outstretched palm.

And the wolf within him was ravening now, and with liquid fire was no longer to be appeased.

The hungry man stood erect; his figure swayed. he had to support himself by clinging to a tree.

At this very moment there fell upon his ears the sound of distant bells—soft distant bells, playing music such as he had never heard bells play before. As the sweet melody, floating through the ether of the still night, smote his consciousness, the hobo raised aloft his clenched hands in an attitude of stupefied wonderment. And while he continued to listen, his breast heaved with great sighs of sorrow and despair.

In the belfry of the Mission Inn at Riverside was seated the white-robed figure of a girl. An hour before she had played on the bells the wonted evening songs and chimes. She had lingered in the tower, sorting her music, wrapped in thought, alone with her thoughts, for she wished to be alone. But now she must go, for friends in the music room of the hotel below would be missing her and wondering where she might be, perchance coming in quest of her to the little nook below the bells.

She arose, and turned to depart. But ere bidding reluctant adieu to her solitude, the girl drew from the bosom of her dress a tiny photograph—the snapshot of a youth, with bright, joyous face laughing over the steering wheel of an automobile.

As the girl gazed, her eyes became filmed with tears. With a sigh the hand that held the picture dropped to her side. After a moment of meditation she moved; but not to depart.

She seated herself again on the bench before the frame from which the line of bell ropes hung, dropping the photograph into her lap as she raised her hands. And

then, her whole soul thrown into the music, she rang out on the mission bells the old Jacobite song, sending forth into the silence of the night the plaintive refrain:

"Will ye no come back again?
Will ye no come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be—
Will ye no come back again?"

And a mile away the hobo was listening to the song with which his mother had crooned him to sleep in childhood days on the old Missouri farm!

"Will ye no come back again?"

With each measured silvern note his lips repeated the old familiar word.

"Better lo'ed ye canna be."

"Oh, my God, would my mother love me now—a drunkard and a thief?" he sobbed aloud.

And from out the night rang the last notes of pleading, waking in his heart the last trembling words of mother love:

"Will ye no come back again?"

Then all once more was still—in the darkness among the trees, in the tower beneath the mission bells.

With a gentle sigh the young girl in white arose, restored the photograph to the folds of her dress, stepped to the door, touched the electric-light switch, and was gone, down the narrow winding stairway that led to the cloistered music room whence the subdued strains of the organ were ascending.

An hour or more had passed. The grove of eucalyptus trees was now illumed by the risen moon, a great golden-

red globe that had come creeping up from behind a ridge of distant hills and seemed to be looking down benignly on the slumbering valley, pityingly on the crouching hobo. The man was huddled in a heap on the ground, like some bludgeoned beast of the jungle. The night before on the desert the lullaby sung by the wife of the Texan to her little child had awakened the first faint and scarcely recognized echoes of tender remembrance of the poor old mother left alone to sorrow because of the ruined life of a wayward son. But this night the faintly heard mission bells had rung in his heart a clarion peal, rousing from their dead sleep not only memory but conscience. Convulsive sobs had changed to dumb misery as the hobo cowered and waited, longingly yet fearfully, for further ringing of the bells.

Who can tell what other heart chords were swept that night by the chiming of the sweet-throated mission bells? The girl in the tower had chosen the old Scottish song, all unconscious of its special power to influence the lost and degraded hobo whom she had never seen. Into this song of yearning love and undying loyalty she had breathed the spirit of her own impassioned and prayerful longings. And out into the night had gone the melodious soul-inspired waves of sound, to stir the emotions of hearts attuned in harmony and so set in operation subtle mental forces illimitable and eternal in their potentialities.

Old mission bells!—cast in Spain hundreds of years ago, carried thousands of leagues, in frail caravels over tempestuous seas, on muleback through forests primeval, over snow-capped Sierras and across burning desert plains, used by the padres to summon the ignorant heathen to the service of God, and left after the good fathers themselves had gone to their rest and their reward so that the lesson of their gentle and devoted lives might keep on ringing from generation to generation adown the ages.

That night at least one immortal soul, asleep at the rudder and drifting toward the breakers of doom, had been awakened to realization of danger and sense of responsibility by the warning mission bells. But the message from the belfry had not been for him directly, nor would its full beneficent purpose be accomplished until, carried onward and onward, it should at last and far away reach the other wanderer for whom the imploring song was primarily intended.

And this is the true miracle of the mission bells—that the hearts which hearken to them retransmit in every direction their tender appeal to do the right and forsake the wrong. But if disregarded, the heaven-rung chimes may never be heard again.

CHAPTER V

THE FUGITIVE

The moon was riding high in the heavens when the hobo stirred. Still seated on the ground, he gazed about him, wonderingly, confusedly, as if awakening from a bad dream. Every object around was clearly defined, the deep black shadows cast by the trees or fence posts contrasting sharply with the cold white radiance that suffused the entire landscape. The silence was as the silence of death, the scene one of ineffable calm.

The hobo rose to his feet and drew himself to his full height. He had conquered his emotions; he was cold and calm now as the night itself. For a minute or two he stood stock-still, and listened—listened for the soft, distant chiming of bells. But no sound came now to break the solemn hush of the brooding night.

"Rats! I've been crazy," he muttered. "I don't believe I heard any bells."

He stooped, and with one hand proceeded to brush the dust from the legs of his trousers. His eyes fell upon the purse lying open on the ground and upon the three twenty-dollar gold pieces, fallen by its side. These he quickly gathered up and stowed in the purse.

"I must hide this," his train of thought continued.

After a moment of hesitation he thrust the purse into one of his shoes, loosening the lace for its reception, and then retying it securely.

"Now I've got to put a few miles between me and this town. Perhaps that fat old barkeep will change

twenty dollars without robbing me of it all. It's the safest thing to try, anyway."

He had lifted his coat from the ground, and before adjusting the bottle took a gulp or two of whisky. The liquor burned his parched lips and throat, and caused him to cough.

"Gee! but a drink of cold water would taste fine."

He looked around. There was no water in sight, no sign of habitation.

A minute later he was again on the highroad. One swift glance up and down the valley decided him on the proper direction to take, and he strode away through the silent night and the shimmering moonshine.

He had passed a dozen orange groves. The season was almost over, and the trees were just black patches in the moonlight. But all of a sudden he caught sight of a laden tree standing alone among its stripped fellows, with scores of the yellow fruit gleaming amidst its leafage. No fence intervened, and he crossed the cultivated ground between the lines of trees.

A dull, overwhelming sense of admiration momentarily stayed his hand. This was the first time he had ever seen oranges growing, and in the silvery radiance of the moonlight the golden-fruited tree was a thing of rarest beauty, an inspiration for poet or painter, a revelation even to the sodden brain of a drunken hobo.

But thirst and hunger combined quickly dispelled the faint and passing feeling of reverence. The outcast clutched at one of the oranges, tore open the rind and sucked down the luscious pulp. He ate a second and a third orange, and then again he took the road.

Two or three more miles were rapidly traversed under the stimulus of the slender yet refreshing sustenance. But appetite had been merely whetted, not satisfied. There had been the sensation of relief and comfort which the first few bites of food give to the famished creature, but now had quickly followed the eager craving for

more. The wayfarer was still among the interminable orange groves, and to the right and left his eyes searched for another laden tree.

At last he found one, and this time, after eating several of the fruit, he filled his hat and the opened breast of his shirt with the golden spoil. Again he walked on and on, away from the scene of his crime, making vaguely in the direction of his friend, the saloon-man. His friend!—for the heart of the homeless fugitive warmed toward the one fellow-being who might, perchance, aid him in the hour of need and danger.

But tired nature in the end gave out. The hobo stumbled now as he walked, his tracks zigzagged from side to side of the road. Some time before he had crossed a broad wash, heavy with sand and strewn with boulders—the dried-up watercourse of a river. He was now among open fields, and at a little distance from the highway he caught sight of a big rectangular stack of baled hay. Toward this resting and hiding place his faltering footsteps turned.

On the further side, in the black shadow cast by the moon, he pushed some of the bales apart and stretched himself at full length in the crevice thus formed. He piled his stock of oranges in a little pyramid, and, hungry still, with no choice of other or more accustomed fare, set himself to devouring them. Before long he had consumed the fruit, one and all.

He would have a night cap now, and then an hour or two of sleep. He pulled the cork from the bottle, and applied the latter to his lips.

But at the first whiff of the whisky fumes a strange feeling of revulsion seized him. His gorge rose; he put down the bottle, untasted.

"By gad, what's wrong with me next?" he growled, disdainful of himself because of his weakness. Again he raised the bottle, but again at the very smell of the rye he retched. Wondering, with reluctant fingers he

plugged the bottle with its cork and shoved it under some loose hay.

Then he wrapped himself in his jacket, and, his head pillowed among the sweet-smelling alfalfa, let his muscles relax for rest.

In a few seconds, like a tired dog, the hobo was asleep.

It was breakfast time on a little fruit ranch out in the open expanse of the San Bernardino valley. The rancher and his wife were in the kitchen, the latter busy over the cook-stove with frying-pan and coffee-pot, the former scanning the newspaper that had a few minutes before been popped into the mailbox at the roadside end of the orchard by the rural free delivery carrier driving past in his covered cart. He was reading aloud the headlines of the day's news when a shadow fell across the screened porch beyond the doorway.

It was a familiar enough shadow in those parts—that of a hobo standing in mute appeal, hunger in his look, no words needed from his lips to tell that he was begging for a meal.

The rancher raised his eyes.

"Nothing doing," he said, in prompt appreciation of the situation, waving his newspaper in the direction of the castaway.

"Go along with you," snapped the woman, with an angry little shake of her spider, which eased her feelings no doubt, but sent the fragrant odors of frying ham and eggs in the direction of the hungry vagabond. "You and your kind are a disgrace to America," she added, glad of the chance of a little homily when a little hominy might have better served. "You great, hulking, able-bodied fellow," she continued, improving her opportunity, "why don't you work like the rest of us for an honest living?"

"I'll work for a meal," mumbled the hobo, with hands outstretched in attestation of his sincerity.

"That's what all the Weary Willies say," retorted the woman. "But it's mighty little work they ever do. An apronful of kindling perhaps, and then the road—for the first shady resting-place to pass the day."

The rancher had risen, and stepped out on to the porch. He surveyed the forlorn figure through the screen. There was compassion in his look, but he spoke in hardened tones:

"Well, there's the woodpile over yonder. Go to it, my man. You'll find both saw and axe handy, beside the wood-horse. You can saw the mesquite into stove lengths, or split the cottonwood logs. The choice is up to you."

The hobo slouched away to the woodpile, beside some out-houses, twenty yards distant.

The rancher watched him as he set a thick gnarled root of mesquite on the wood-horse, and waited till the rasping of the saw began. He gave one last glance at the bended figure tugging at the toothed blade of steel.

"He's a green hand," he said to himself with a grim smile, as he turned to re-enter the kitchen. "That tough bit of mesquite will break his heart before very long."

"It's just like you, Tom," grumbled his wife. "Soft-hearted every time."

But the rancher only smiled again, for he noticed that already an extra thick slice had been cut from the ham and tossed into the sizzling spider.

"That's right, my dear," he said, laying a kindly hand on the good wife's shoulder. "You can see for yourself that the poor chap isn't fit to work till he's had something to eat."

His ear had detected that the saw, after several spasmodic spurts, was already silent, and, anxious now lest the starveling might slip away in despair before the food was ready, he went to the screen door and waved an encouraging hand.

The hobo observed the signal. He had dropped the saw. He now took up the axe and swung a jaded blow on a log of cottonwood.

A few minutes later the thick slice of ham, with a fried egg on top, was between two liberal slabs of bread, and the rancher had placed the fare on an old newspaper, to serve both as tray and platter.

"Here, Tom, take him this mug of coffee, too," said the woman, quietly now and pensively. "We've got boys of our own out in the world, although God be thanked, they're not wastrels like that good-for-nothing there."

The hobo, seated on the woodpile, ate his first square meal since six-and-thirty hours, during which time he had not only held the rods of a freight car for the best part of a night, but in the day and night following had tramped fully a score of miles. He ate at first ravenously, but later on slowly, eking out the morsels and the minutes of rest from axe or saw. The generous warmth of the coffee appealed to him; he sipped the last sips meditatively and lingeringly.

He was eying the twisted stump of mesquite, against which the teeth of the saw had rasped as against a billet of steel. He was recalling the experienced advice of his yeggman comrade on the desert: "Never saw wood, kiddo; it takes the stuffin' out of a feller."

The recollection of the words brought another thought to his mind. Where was the yeggman now? The inquiry prompted an uneasy glance around.

He could see the rancher driving a cultivator at the further end of the orchard. The wife was no longer visible in the kitchen; she was probably washing the breakfast dishes in the back porch.

"Guess a spot of whisky's the right thing after that ham," said the hobo to himself, as he reached for his coat and slunk behind the outhouses.

But this time he took only a tiny gulp of the rye. Somehow it tasted bad to him, and he spat after drinking. He folded up his coat again, placed it on the cord of fuel, and returned to the wood-horse.

"Never saw wood, kiddo"—back came the words on the wings of memory.

He shrank from the saw, and resumed the axe.

Thump! thump! thump!

The woman's face peeped in surprise out of the doorway; the rancher at the turn of the furrowed row bestowed a kindly word.

Thump! thump! thump!

"Great Scott! Would that doggoned log never split?" groaned the hobo.

He stood erect, and with the back of his hand wiped great beads of perspiration from his brow. His glance fell on a long line of young willow trees, running straight across country and receding into the distance.

The axe dropped from his fingers, the coat just slipped itself over his arm, and the vagrant was off, round the outhouses, mooching stealthily away under cover of the willows. He was ashamed, and therefore instinctively concealed his movements.

Like a scurrying jack-rabbit the hobo took to his heels when he had gained a hundred yards.

The rancher had seen it all; he had reined in his horse while he watched, and now he sent a pitying nod after the fleeing figure. "Too bad," he murmured regretfully. "Somehow I thought he was a bit different from the common sort."

The rancher's wife, too, had been a covert witness of the scene. Her face was redder now from indignation than it had been a while ago over the cook-stove.

"That's the last ham and egg sandwich I'll ever fry before the chores are done," was her decisive remark, as she vindictively smashed a fly on the table with a flick of the dishcloth in her hand.

CHAPTER VI

WITHIN THE FOLD

For a mile or more the hobo skirted the willows, paying no heed to the direction he was following, intent only on keeping out of sight. This furtiveness was the unconscious expression of his own shame; he was trying to hide, not from others, but from himself—the mean despicable creature so lost to self-respect, so flabby of will, that he could sneak a meal rather than pay for it by an hour of manly toil.

At last he came to a halt and took a rest and his bearings. He was out in the open country, away from the highroad he had been following. At considerable distances apart were the roofs of houses peeping through orchards and clumps of shade trees. But here he was quite alone.

His listening ear now for the first time caught the purling of swiftly-flowing water, and, pulling apart the dense growth of young willow trees, he beheld a ten-foot-wide stream flowing in a rounded cemented channel. The water was clear with the greenish clearness of melted snow, and the depth at the middle point would be two or three feet. On the further side of the stream were more willows, and through these he caught sight of the mountain range across the valley toward which he had been steering since the early hours of dawn. To re-

gain his proper line of direction he would have to cross the irrigation ditch. He crept in among the willows, to the edge of the stream.

He stooped and dipped a hand into the water. It was ice cold, in contrast to the blazing sunshine of the mid-summer morning. But the shock was a pleasant one. With both hands now the hobo dabbled in the stream, and forming them into a cup he lapped the cold water again and again.

He would wade across the ditch, so he removed his shoes and socks and rolled up his trousers above the knees. The footwear he wrapped in his jacket, and this with the aid of his belt he made carefully into a bundle—the purse with the gold had been thrust into the toe of one of his shoes, and the bottle had to be preserved from breakage. The bundle he tossed lightly among the willows on the further side. Then he proceeded to ford the narrow stream.

But almost at the first step his foot slipped from under him on the sloping and slimy cement, and in another instant he was floundering in the water like a shaggy Newfoundland dog. For a minute he was rolled over and over by the swift and powerful current, but he made a grab at the overhanging withies on the side for which he had been making, and pulled himself on to dry land. Gasping for breath, sputtering and cursing, he stood erect—soaked to the skin, his garments dripping jets of water, a ludicrous figure in his semi-habiliments, had there been any onlooker there to smile.

There was no help for it. The hobo removed his drenched clothes, and, before spreading them out on the willows to dry, sluiced them again and again in the running stream, making a complete job of the involuntary washing to which they had been subjected. Jacket and socks were dipped, rubbed and wrung, and added to the laundry display. Then the man bathed, of his own free will this time, tumbling and splashing in the cool

and refreshing stream with the keen zest of enjoyment that brought back memories of boyhood days and the water-hole in the river beneath the overshadowing elms.

An hour later the hobo emerged from among the willows—clean and sweet as he had not been for many long days, sun-dried and sun-warmed, a tinge of healthy red beneath the tan of his cheeks, the puffiness of face gone, the blue eyes clear, even the stubbly beard, now a soft downy growth, no longer displeasing, while the tumbled thatch of brown hair gave a touch of vagabond picturesqueness to the stalwart square-set frame.

Physically at all events the outcast of the desert had come back to his own; he was again a man. With pliant muscles he vaulted over a fence on the further side of the field beyond the willows. Then head erect, the warm red blood of manly strength coursing and tingling through every vein, the old shambling gait changed to firm and springy step, he once more took the road, the first that offered—a road that pointed toward the domed peak of San Antonio, monarch of the Sierra Madre, the mother mountains from whose towering serrated crest the last clinging mists of the night that had changed to day were slowly dissolving.

Nestled on the foothills beneath San Antonio—Old Baldy, as the residents fondly name the towering mountain that looks down benignantly and protectingly on their nook of peacefulness and restfulness—is the university town of Claremont; its white college buildings, hall, library and inn, lecture rooms, laboratories and dormitories, grouped about the campus fringed with primeval live-oaks; beautiful homes clustered around; the whole embowered amidst groves of orange, lemon, and olive trees, avenues of gnarled peppers with widespread drooping foliage, tufted palms and ragged-barked gums shooting up straight and tall into the sky of azure.

Something unusual was happening in Claremont that

summer eventide. Around the campus several score of vehicles of every description were standing under the shade trees—surreys, buckboards, dog-carts, family wagons, bicycles and motorcycles, with a sprinkling of automobiles, some of them the costly machines of latest pattern, others of antiquated type though but ten or a dozen years old, bone-shaking rattletraps whose usefulness in the back blocks might have survived but whose value now lay chiefly with the industrial museum. The whole countryside seemed to have flocked into the college town.

In the neighborhood of the broad flight of wooden steps leading to the university hall was gathered a considerable throng, a wonderfully variegated throng—men, women, and children, professors, college girls and boys, townsmen and ranchers, toilers with the brain and toilers with the hands, in every grade of costume from the Prince Albert coat to the khaki tunic, poor as well as rich no doubt, though all wore an air of comfortable prosperity, chatting, laughing, enjoying the cool evening air before entering the building.

Into this throng strayed the hobo, in shirt and trousers, his coat still slung across one arm, his battered soft felt hat dangling in the other hand by his side. Turning from the tree-shaded roadway down which he had come, he stood in the midst of the people before he realized where he was. Dazed and confused, for a moment he leaned an arm against the trunk of a giant live-oak growing right in the middle of the college avenue. Then recovering his self-possession, he turned to withdraw from such incongruous surroundings.

But at this very instant a murmur of gratified expectancy ran through the gathering, and the hobo's wandering gaze fastened on the figure of a man, tall, lean, clean-shaven, ascetic looking, advancing up the avenue. The newcomer's head was bare, and the tails of a clerical-looking coat flapped behind him as he advanced with

long rapid strides. One hand pressed a Bible against his breast.

"Here he comes"—"That's he." The hobo heard the general buzz of recognition, and the narrowing circle had already cut off his retreat by the way he had come.

But for the moment the thought of flight had gone. He stood motionless, his eyes riveted on the approaching figure.

By the garb and appearance of the man he knew him to be a preacher, but the name of the world-celebrated London divine now on everybody's lips around him fell uncomprehended upon his ears.

And straight toward the lonely hobo under the live-oak strode the preacher.

"Come with me, brother," he said simply, placing his disengaged arm across the outcast's shoulders. From his eyes beamed a light of soul-compelling loving-kindness under which the other's gaze quailed and sought the ground.

Without word or movement of remonstrance the bewildered vagabond obeyed, and preacher and hobo together ascended the stairs. The throng, silenced, surprised, awed by its very surprise, hesitated for a moment to follow, and the two figures, irradiated by the golden rays of the setting sun, passed through the portals at the head of the stairway, alone.

The central part of the hall was already three-parts filled with students, young men and young women, the latter in white summer garments that made them look in the semi-darkness like rows or parterres of marguerites.

The preacher chose a side aisle, and advanced, his arm still across the hobo's shoulders. The side pews were as yet only sparsely occupied, and into one of these, well forward in the hall, a three-seated niche, the preacher turned the hobo. He spoke no word—just gave a kindly

parting pat on the arm as he pressed the vagrant down into a seat, and then moved on toward the platform.

The throng from without was now streaming in and quickly filling the vacant spaces. The soft notes of a voluntary played on the organ were stealing through the hall. Soon the last stragglers were standing in the aisles at the rear, looking anxiously for places.

The hobo was still alone. Uncomfortably he shifted himself to the seat next the wall. But no one seemed inclined to share the remaining places in the pew. He sat in solitude and bowed his head in ashamed consciousness that he was being shunned.

But all at once a student arose in the center of the hall, and moving along the crowded row of his fellows, somewhat to their momentary inconvenience and discomfort, made for the side aisle. This gained, he advanced and seated himself beside the downcast and disconsolate hobo. And, following this example, a professor on the platform among the group clustered behind the tall figure of the preacher descended, and took the third place in the pew.

Every seat in the hall was now occupied, and with a triumphant crash of chords the voluntary came to an end.

The hobo waited and listened. He would have fled, assuredly, had flight been possible. But he was like a captive of the wild, caged and chained, timid from very helplessness. With stolid resignation he sat motionless, not daring to raise his eyes or glance around.

He heard a hymn given out—the words read from the platform by one of the professors. The student by his side had opened a book and placed it in his hand. But he held it mechanically between listless fingers, paying no heed to the lettered page nor to the resonant voice that come from the upper end of the hall.

When there was a general movement, and all present rose to their feet, the hobo likewise rose, awkwardly and

uncomfortably, but dimly recognizing that to remain seated alone among the assemblage would have been more awkward and uncomfortable still.

A gently-played plaintive melody from the organ broke the hush that had followed the rustle of garments, and after the first few bars the form of the hobo became rigid, as if an electric shock had thrilled him and rendered him incapable of movement.

Once again it was the voice of mother love crying out to his conscience and pleading with his soul. The great assemblage was singing one of the hymns his mother had loved best of all, an old-fashioned hymn with sadness in notes and words but a strange ring of triumph as well:

"O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And rescue captive Israel;
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,
Shall come to thee, O Israel."

The listener clutched the book-rest before him in the struggle to master his emotions.

The song surged on to its tender and appealing close, its last mournful cadence, and with the rest of the congregation the hobo dropped down into his seat.

But his eyes were raised now, and they were fastened on the tall, gaunt preacher who had advanced, Bible in hand, to the reading desk in front of the platform.

CHAPTER VII

GETHSEMANE

In the faint twilight the preacher from afar spoke his message to the college boys and girls, to professors, to town dwellers and country dwellers, to the hobo, to the rich and poor, to learned and unlearned, to every one present in the great hushed assemblage.

He began by reading from one of the gospels the story of the rich youth who came eagerly running to Jesus, asking what he must do that he might inherit eternal life, but who went away slowly and exceeding sorrowful because renunciation of his great possessions was the price to be paid for taking up the cross and following the Saviour.

On this theme the preacher enlarged, and before he had progressed very far it could be seen on the faces of his auditors, not a few of them clergymen like himself who had spent their lives in studying the scriptures, that a new flood of light was being thrown upon an old, old story that had been read many times but only imperfectly comprehended.

The rich and high-born youth, comely, a clean liver, filled with ardent and noble aspirations, craving for eternal life, or rather the eternal things in life, was not bidden by Christ to strip himself of all his worldly belongings, but to devote these material belongings as well as everything else he possessed, his abilities, his affec-

tions, his energies, his ideals, to the unselfish and unstinted service of God. In giving wisely and generously, yet judiciously, to the poor, he would be helping the good work of spreading comfort, contentment and happiness, of sending joy into lives that were joyless, of kindling responsive impulses to brotherly service, of diffusing the very spirit of the immanent God of love who enwraps the whole world as with a mantle of universal loving-kindness. No need to surrender worldly goods except in so far as they are selfishly used. For the rich youth of the Bible story to have thrown down his wealth to be scrambled for among the beggars would have been both to demoralize and debase the recipients of his thoughtless and reprehensible bounty, and to impoverish his own usefulness when he came to take up the cross and follow in the footsteps of the great regenerator of humanity.

On and on flowed the tide of inspired eloquence—no loud declaiming, only an occasional gesture to point a moral or enforce a precept, no rhetorical flights of poetic fancy, just the plain simple teachings impressing themselves like hammer-strokes on the hearts and intellects of the rapt and soul-stirred audience.

"But it is not only your possessions you have to surrender to the service of God," rang forth, in the deep hush, the voice of the preacher; "it is your sins, your secretly cherished vices, your failings of character known perhaps only to your own selves, that you have to abandon if your love of Jesus is sincere and your yearning to aid his work for mankind can become effective."

The hobo stirred in his seat; unconsciously he leaned a little nearer toward the tall, and now but dimly seen, figure of the teacher on the platform.

"Christ came to save sinners, not by vicariously bearing their sins, but by pointing the way for sinners to free themselves from the burden of selfish sin that prevents them from following his example of living a life

of unselfish love for mankind. So the injunction to give up all and 'come and follow Me' means the renunciation of sin just as much as the application of worldly goods and mental gifts to the service of love for your fellowmen. It is an appeal not merely to those among you richly endowed with wealth or power, but one to which the poorest beggar, the worst sinner may respond."

The hobo, in the deepening darkness of the hall, felt that the preacher was preaching to him alone—that his eyes, although no longer seen, were probing into the most secret recesses of the listener's soul.

"Creeds and churches are as nothing," the voice continued. "Religion is in a man's own heart. It is love of his fellow-beings, the love for wife and children, the love for father and mother, the love for friends, the love for the cheerful and happy ones, the love for the sorrowing and degraded ones, the love for the good man or woman striving to be a little better, for the fallen man or woman struggling to be a little less vile, the love for the universal brotherhood of mankind all going through the same fiery but ennobling ordeal of life and its manifold experiences—it is such soul-pervading love, animating to the right deed, the just deed, the kind and generous and unselfish deed, that makes the good Moslem or the good Buddhist as true a follower of Christ as the avowed disciple of the humble carpenter of Nazareth, the one man perfected by unselfish love until he became a veritable son of God. Love is the one great heaven-sent gift to humankind—for God is love, and love is God, and to wish with true-hearted sincerity to live the loving, unselfish life of Christ is to be redeemed by Christ, and so to realize the aspirations of the inquiring young man and inherit the joy and happiness of the eternal life to come."

The voice in the semi-darkness ceased. But for minute after minute there was not a whisper or a movement in the great hall. Heads were bowed in silent prayer,

and the hobo felt his hand gripped and wrung by the student at his side.

At last the faint tremulous notes of the organ breathed through the profound silence, the tense strain was broken, here a strong man furtively wiped the moisture from his eyes, there a woman exchanged a reverential whisper with her neighbor, and then the whole congregation rose for the final evensong—"Lord, with me abide."

A few minutes later the audience was dispersing, many crowding forward to shake hands and exchange just one personal word with the preacher, others departing silent and thoughtful through the wide-opened portals.

In the confusion the hobo slipped out of the building, down the broad flight of steps, into the cool and refreshing night air. For a moment he lingered under the live-oak in the middle of the avenue; then he turned and stole away into the dusk of the tree-shaded road by which one short hour before he had come.

And what was that one hour to mean for the future life of this man, and of the fellow men with whom he would henceforth come into contact? The dull inarticulate question was already knocking at the gate of his own consciousness.

Beyond the college town, along the road he was following, was a wilderness of wild brush, traversed by a broad wash, down which the cloudbursts of remote ages had rolled giant boulders that had formed themselves in places into fantastic cromlech-like groupings. Into one of these secluded spots the hobo turned his steps and sat him down in the darkness, his back against a rock.

Although he knew it not, it was his Garden of Gethsemane—the garden that comes at least once into all men's lives, the garden where the soul sits naked before its own eyes, the garden over which the angel from heaven hovers, whispering encouragement to the broken wayfarer, strengthening him in his efforts to throw off

the back-bending and heart-breaking burden of selfish sin.

It was past the midnight hour when at last the hobo emerged from the obscurity of the rocky recess. He was wearing his coat now, and his first act was to shiver the whisky bottle on a big boulder, spattering its remainder contents over the pebbles and sand.

CHAPTER VIII

FOOTSTEPS RETRACED

Mingling with the rancher's awakening half-dreams was the rasping of a saw at the woodpile. At last the man sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes. There was a spell of silence for the moment. He looked toward the drawn shade of the window, against which was showing the gray light of the breaking dawn. A rooster crowed in shrill salute, and then again came the rasping of the saw. But it was no dream this time; the rancher listened to the gradually varying sound, and he knew to a second when the severed length of mesquite would drop to the ground.

Thud!

He did not hear the thud, but he nodded in anticipation of the recurring interval of silence that told the tale of another good six inches of tough root sawn through.

The saw was soon at work again, and in his night garment the rancher stole to the window and lifted one corner of the shade.

"Yes, by jiminy, it's that young feller back again. I knew he was different from the common sort."

And that his wife might have the immediate benefit of his sapient judgment he shook her still slumbering form by the shoulder and eagerly told the news.

"You don't say?" she sleepily murmured. "It's not possible."

"Believe your own senses then," was the impatient rejoinder. "There goes the saw again."

Rasp! rasp! rasp!

The woman sat up; it was her turn now to rub her eyes to make sure that she was awake.

"Well, I'm glad," she said, "that I ordered that extra half-pound of steak. For the land's sake! A hobo come back to complete his chores! Wonders will never end."

The rancher had reached for his clothes, but the good wife lay down again, to take her proper due of forty extra winks and recover her mental equilibrium.

By the time that breakfast was ready the hobo was surrounded, knee-high, with the evidence of his recovered strength and industry. An hour before he had exchanged a few words with the rancher, accepted the gentle smile of commendation with a cheerful "good morning," and then, while the other went about his accustomed early duties, had resumed with renewed zest and vigor his self-allotted task of toil.

He was stacking the cord of neatly-sawn stove lengths when the woman's voice summoned him from the porch.

"Come in to your breakfast, my man."

The hobo flushed with pleasure and surprise. He just paused at a faucet under a lean-to shed, the door of which stood open. On a nail above the faucet hung a towel, and on an empty molasses keg close by was an inviting cake of soap. The hobo washed the sweat of honest labor from hands and brow, and then, diffidently but with manly frankness, entered the kitchen to the hospitality of which he had been invited.

"My word, but you're looking fine and dandy today," said the rancher's wife in kindly welcome and unfeigned admiration.

"And feeling fine and dandy," he replied with a

pleasant smile, as he took his appointed place at the table by the rancher's side.

The meal passed happily; the news of the day was exchanged; and the vagrant guest ate his breakfast of steak and hot biscuits and fragrant coffee with the relish which the full knowledge that he had earned it supplied.

"You've had a wash," laughed the house mother, at the close of the meal. "Now, perhaps, you'd like a shave."

The hobo, reflectively and half-amusedly, stroked his stubbled chin.

"It would make a powerful difference to your looks," continued the old woman with blunt frankness. "My boy George left a razor behind, and a shaving brush also, if I'm not mistaken. Here they are; and a little mirror too, cracked, but I've no doubt you'll manage with it."

While speaking, she had reached up to a shelf above the cook-stove, and was now with her apron rubbing away the accumulated dust from the enumerated items of tonsorial treasure-trove.

"And here's an empty marmalade jar for the hot water," she went on, as she tilted the spout of the tea-kettle steaming on the stove.

The hobo laughingly took the various articles in his hands, and a clean towel as well, and retired to the privacy of the lean-to.

"Gee whizz, but it's a tougher job than the mesquite," he said to himself, as he made the third application of lather and still ruefully felt a few reluctant patches of stubble beneath his searching finger-tips. "That, or else George forgot to sharpen his old razor before he lit out from home," he laughed, as at last he dried his face in the towel.

The hobo returned to the screened porch, where the master of the house was standing. It was a really fine

and determined-looking face now that showed itself revealed in every feature.

The rancher nodded approval of the change effected. His eyes took the direction of the stacked pile of freshly sawn mesquite.

"I reckon that I owe you a full dollar in cash, young man," he said, with a friendly tap on the shoulder.

"Not one dime," came the decisive response. "I'm just going to split a few of those cottonwood logs first, and then I must take the road for Riverside—that's the name of the town, I've been told."

"Yes, Riverside's fourteen miles further along. I haven't got work for a helper on the ranch at present or I'd take you on, young feller."

"Oh, I'm out for work now, and I'll get it, never fear," he replied, as he jerked back his doubled fists to show with unconscious pride the brawny muscles of his arms.

The rancher's wife emerged from the kitchen; she had seen and heard.

"And sure you will," she exclaimed, in hearty encouragement. "The likes of you will always get a job. That shave was just the finishing touch needed," she added, stepping back a pace the better to complete her appreciative inspection. "Now, where do you come from, young man, and what may be your name?"

But the rancher gently interposed. He knew that such questions are not in accordance with the etiquette of the vagabond trail.

"Don't be too inquisitive, my dear," he said, in a half-whisper which the young fellow overheard.

The face of the nameless vagrant had become grave, but in a moment it cleared again.

"Call me Donald for the present," he said, quietly but cheerfully. "Some day I'll write to you and tell you how I'm getting on."

"We'll be real glad to hear of your success," was the warm-hearted and cordial reply.

"Here's an old envelope with the name and address," added the rancher, taking a bunch of letters from his coat.

Donald carefully placed the paper in the pocket of his shirt and then strode off to complete his task.

"My, but he's a worker, and no mistake," said the good woman, as an hour later husband and wife stood together at the woodpile and surveyed the neat stack of mesquite and the great heap of split cottonwood.

A few minutes before the hobo had departed, with a cheery good-by to help him on his way.

"Well, didn't I tell you from the first that he was different from the other kind?" said the rancher, with almost acriminous pertinacity. "I saw it in his eye, and in his square-set jaw."

"Go along with you, Tom," laughed the woman, giving him a playful shove on the shoulder. "You never even saw his jaw till I made him shave. You're just soft-hearted always; good or bad, it's all the same. But I'll allow that you hit it right this time."

"Oh, it's easy to say that. But I told you last night when you were still angry over the ham-and-egg sandwich that the young fellow had real grit if he'd only show it."

But the woman was no longer listening. She was watching the lonesome figure now far away along the road; and when she turned to re-enter the kitchen and resume her daily duties, with a corner of her apron she secretly wiped away a tear.

"God forbid," she murmured to herself, "that any son of mine should ever have to tramp the country and do odd jobs for a meal."

The owner of the lost purse was pacing his room. He was a man about thirty years of age. His smooth-shaven face with clean-cut features was a strikingly handsome one, although not altogether a pleasant one, for both in the eyes and in the curve of the lips there was a habitual expression that gave the suggestion of defiance—it might be cynical defiance, courageous defiance, or angry defiance, acording to the mood of the man. At present wrath was in predominance; as he paced the room his words came with a snap and a snarl.

"It's always the same with the police. Unless the clue is chalked right along the sidewalk they can't find anyone."

"But where is the clue?" quietly asked the man to whom this remark was addressed. He was in plain clothes, but from underneath his coat there peeped an officer's star.

"The purse that was stolen of course. Haven't I described it in every detail? Then there is the broken hedge, and the obvious footprints on the lawn. Good Lord, sheriff, there are a dozen clues."

"Well, all I can say, Mr. Wilmington, is that the whole city and district have been scoured, and there is not a hobo in sight, nor a bad character on whom we can rest reasonable suspicion. But telegrams have been sent all over the valley, and the matter won't be allowed to rest."

As he spoke the sheriff rose to terminate the interview.

"Oh, I don't propose to let the matter rest," rejoined the victim of the theft. "Make no mistake about that. It is not the loss of the sixty dollars that concerns me. But there is a principle involved—a principle specially vital to me as a banking man who has to handle money every day in his life. That a visitor to Riverside staying in a friend's home can have his purse pilfered from his room in broad daylight——"

"Starlight," corrected the other, coldly.

"Well, call it starlight. That's a minor point. I simply say that the whole affair is a disgrace to the police of Riverside."

At this very moment a shadow fell across the room, and the figure of the hobo appeared framed in the open French casement. He had traversed the lawn with noiseless footsteps, and there he stood—the purse in his outstretched hand.

"I've brought this back," he said simply.

The owner grabbed at the purse and opened it. In his palm lay the three big discs of gold.

"The money is intact, Mr. Wilmington," remarked the officer.

"Yes," sneered the banker. "He brought it back because he couldn't change the twenty-dollar pieces."

A flush crept under the tan of the hobo's face, and he shifted uneasily on his feet. But he attempted no explanation, made no plea.

"You stole this purse from the table here the night before last?" asked the sheriff, quietly and not unkindly.

"I took it on the impulse of the moment," replied the hobo. "It was thrown down there, the window was left open, and I was starving."

"Where are you from?"

"I came in from the desert three days ago."

"How?"

"By a freight-train. I held the rods."

"Ah, ha! A hobo, as I guessed," exclaimed Wilmington, with a triumphant glance at the sheriff, "although you said just now that there wasn't one in town."

With a wave of the hand the officer deprecated the interruption and continued his interrogation.

"You've been tramping?"

The culprit by his silence gave assent.

"Show me your hands."

He stretched out his hands.

"The palms. Turn them over."

The palms were turned over. They were calloused at every joint—not with the blisters of a few hours' work at the woodpile, but with the indurated proofs of years of hard toil.

"This man is no hobo," said the sheriff, turning to Wilmington.

"No hobo!" snarled the latter viciously. "No hobo! Why, he admitted it himself. One of those brake-beam tourists who are a curse to California and should be swept off the face of the earth."

"He has brought back the money."

"What of that? As I said before there is a principle involved."

"Then you desire to prosecute him?"

"Desire? I insist on it. I should be wanting in my duty to the public were I to do otherwise. A mighty slim chance I'd have had of seeing my money again if it had been in small change."

Once more the hobo flushed. He clenched and slightly raised his hands, but with an effort mastered himself, and spoke no word.

"I shall take charge of the purse then, with the sixty dollars," said the sheriff. "It is a necessary part of the evidence in the case."

"By all means," assented the accuser with a satisfied smile, as he snapped the clasp of the purse and handed it over.

"Of course, you understand that this is a mighty serious matter for the young man," remarked the officer.

"Sixty days on the rock-pile will do him all the good in the world," replied the banker.

"But the amount involved makes this a case of grand
and a penitentiary sentence if the charge is

e better. Folsom or San Quentin is just the

place for such rogues and vagabonds. Too few of them get caught."

"This man did not get caught," mildly suggested the sheriff. "He has surrendered."

"Yes," sneered the banker, "for the obvious reason, as I have said, that he knew he would be arrested the moment he tried to change the first twenty-dollar gold-piece. This surrendering is the merest flim-flam—just an excuse to whine for mercy, or a put-up job on the off-chance of getting a few dollars out of me."

The accused man took one step forward.

"I am not here after a few dollars, or to whine for mercy," he said tensely. "I came to give you back your money and to put myself right with myself as well."

"The usual bunkum!"

"Very well, call it bunkum if you cannot understand. I expected no mercy, and have come prepared to take my medicine."

The self-confessed offender against the law folded his arms across his breast, and for a moment under his calm, steady gaze the banker winced.

He turned uneasily to the sheriff and spoke in half-apologetic explanation:

"I don't propose to commit a crime myself by compounding a felony."

"Then you will swear to the complaint?" asked the officer.

"Certainly. Do your duty, Mr. Sheriff, as I am doing mine."

For a moment the sheriff, still hesitating, still reluctant to act, looked at the banker. Familiar with crime and with hardened criminals, the pity of a needlessly wrecked life appealed to him—the pity of a wrecked life with the inevitable train of consequences, the unknown harvest of suffering for innocent ones loving or depending on this storm-driven hulk of a man, the possibilties of infinite good for the delinquent himself and

for those around him if only the final crash on the rocks could be averted.

All such considerations were to be thrust aside that the punitive spirit of the law might be upheld, that at the cost of a throbbing human life a sacrosanct principle should be vindicated, and this at the best a doubtful principle, for the vital thing in the penal law is to save the criminal and not merely to subject him to retaliatory suffering. The pity of it!

So in the sheriff's brief contemplative regard there were both appeal and protest—a plea for mercifulness, a rebuke at the display of relentlessness which official responsibility forbade him to voice in words. But when the banker's face remained obdurate, when the eyes that met his were still hard and pitiless as steel, thought of possible clemency vanished because of its very hopelessness, while the dull sense of resentment became merged in half-contemptuous pity for the being who could give such a revelation of man's proverbial inhumanity to man.

With an almost imperceptible shoulder-shrug the officer turned away, while Wilmington, to show that on his side discussion was over, ostentatiously began to busy himself with sorting some papers that lay on a bureau near to his hand.

"Come with me, my man," said the sheriff, tapping the culprit on the shoulder.

No handcuffs were produced. By the open window officer and prisoner left the room. Then they moved away side by side, across the lawn and out by the gateway at the end of the cypress hedge.

Just as they reached the road a peal of silvery chimes burst upon the evening air—tumultuous, joyful, ringing the changes in every variation of harmony.

"The bells!" murmured Donald, halting involuntarily. "Then they are real bells?" he asked, inanely and abstractedly, with a befogged look at his companion.

"Sure, they're real bells," replied the sheriff, with a significant smile. "So you had been drinking when you took that purse? I thought as much."

Wilmington was alone in the room where the die of fate had just been cast. The effect upon him of the clamor of the bells was to dissipate the last trace of the uncomfortable feeling that had been momentarily engendered by the hobo's calm and masterful gaze.

"Pshaw!" The exclamation was one of supreme contempt for the vagabond who had been sent to his well-deserved doom. No doubt the fallen wretch was being pushed deeper into the mire to which he belonged. But the suffering of a mere individual was of no account when weighed against the sacred law of social economy—that what a man has in material possessions he shall be assisted by all his fellow men to hold.

"Pshaw!" The exclamation was now one of impatience at himself—that the question should be deemed worth a second thought; and with its utterance the incident was at an end. As the bells continued to ring forth the gamut of their changes, the banker, with a smile of supercilious satisfaction, resolutely set himself to think of other things.

But had his soul been properly attuned he might have caught in the tumultuous chiming the muffled leitmotif of warning that came again and again in the descending scale, only to be snatched away by the ascending notes that finally culminated in a silvery peal of mocking laughter.

For fate, too, had smiled, and when the deadened listening soul had remained deadened and heedless still, now laughed aloud. Little did the iron-hearted man of principle dream that in the broken hobo whom he had just contumeliously dismissed from his presence and his

thoughts he had at last met the destined antagonist with whom he would henceforth be locked, soul to soul, in a wrestling struggle that would test every resource of agile thought, every fiber of endurance, and would place at stake all that makes life best worth living as the victor's prize.

CHAPTER IX

THE HAND OF THE LAW

"It appears to me," said the judge of the superior court, when the fateful moment for passing sentence had arrived, "that this is a case presenting very remarkable and exceptional features. The prisoner, after surrendering himself to justice, has pleaded guilty to the act of felony as charged. But he committed the crime when crazed by alcohol and suffering acutely from hunger. The fact that he had been drinking for days to excess does not condone the offense; the prisoner's responsibilities began when he entered on his drinking bout, and therefore all the consequences that followed rest upon his own shoulders. Nor can hunger be held to justify theft; had he applied in the proper quarter he would have been fed. Nevertheless both drink and hunger are factors in the case, and may rightly be considered when we come to find the punishment to fit the crime.

"I am satisfied that the stealing of the purse was quite unpremeditated—that the drunk and famished man acted under an uncontrollable momentary impulse when the temptation was placed under his very eyes. I have listened to the manly and straightforward statement in extenuation made by the prisoner himself, to the powerful plea for probation advanced voluntarily as a friend of the court and in the interests of justice by one of the most respected members of the bar who in kindness of heart had felt impelled to interview the

"You'll look after our young friend, Mr. Dana?" asked the officer in pleased surprise. "That will be the best thing possible. You take all further anxiety off my mind."

"There is a home waiting for him in Los Angeles, and work for him as well. All the sad things in the past will be forgotten and present usefulness and happiness will roll away from the future every cloud of care. Donald and I will soon be good friends, won't we, brother?"

The words were spoken with a bright look and in a cheerful tone, both of which were infectious. Protector and probationer looked into each other's eyes, and, just as the spark of electricity leaps across the gap between pole and pole, so the spirit of trust and comradeship instantaneously passed from the one heart into the other, showing that only close contact was necessary to establish the continuous circuit that would keep aglow the noblest aspirations of both souls.

That night Donald slept in Bethlehem—a new Bethlehem, in the new world of the Far West, in the new city of Los Angeles, in the new sphere of philanthropic activity that teaches the loving-kindness of the founder of Christianity by works rather than by words, by deeds and not by creeds—a new Bethlehem set in surroundings just as lowly and humble as the old Bethlehem of Judea whence rolled the mightiest wave of moral uplift humanity has ever known.

The room he occupied opened on a screened balcony, and here his cot was spread, and while he lay conning the happenings of the eventful day he was breathing deep into his lungs the cool sweet air of the summer night, while his eyes gazed upward into the star-bespangled sky.

The two hours' railway journey from Riverside to Los Angeles had been for the newcomer from the east

a delight and a revelation. He had been borne through interminable vistas of orange groves, orchards and vineyards, past flourishing trim-built towns with tree-shaded streets and garden homes, down the great broad sweeping valley of sunshine and fertility, of prosperity and happiness where to live is to rejoice, and to work is to beautify the face of nature and draw from her generous breast the milk and the honey, the fruits and the flowers, that give sustenance both to body and to soul.

And all this rich domain, as Donald learned from his "guide, philosopher and friend," had but fifty years before been a useless wilderness—waterless, clothed only with mean and desiccated scrub, the undisputed habitation of lean jack-rabbits and hungry coyotes. Irrigation had been the one wizard word under whose magic spell, as by the waving of a fairy wand, the whole scene had been transformed from barren desolation to overflowing fecundity. As he listened to the story with wondering ears, and gazed over the landscape with wondering eyes, to him no longer was the song of the desert a mournful dirge, but now through the glorious swelling music he caught the strains of joy and triumphant victory.

John Dana, his new-found friend, had brought him straight to his own home, in the Bethlehem of Los Angeles, and after the first two or three hours he had already come to understand the application of that sacred name to a fortuitous and scattered group of unpretentious buildings in the humblest and most crowded quarter of a great city, built originally for different purposes, acquired one by one as the good work grew, and now bound together as an institution, not by the genius of an architect or the artistic taste of a landscape artist, but by the simple bonds of man's devoted and unselfish love for his brother man.

Merely a few modest buildings is the new Bethlehem! A coffee clubhouse providing cheap, wholesome and

homelike meals; a reading and recreation room, where Donald saw youths and men gathered after the day of toil, with books, periodicals and newspapers, chess or checkers, or just the charm of friendly, sympathetic and cheerful companionship, as the inducements that made the place a happier resort than poolroom or saloon; then the social hall where through the evening there was the pleasure of what might be called communal family life —the mother darning, perhaps, while she chatted with her neighbor, the father tickling the baby as it rolled and laughed on the floor, the young boys and girls dancing to the music of a piano when the mood prompted them, with an occasional song or reading to hold the attention of all and beguile the passing hour.

Donald had also been shown the fine bathhouse and plunge, the laundries with every modern convenience provided, and the workshops where gifts of discarded clothing or household furnishings were made as good as new—yes, better than new, if useful service be taken as the standard of worth. He had also attended the evensong service in the chapel.

"You need not come to church," had said the Rev. John Dana, with a bright smile, "unless you feel so inclined. But I think you would enjoy it all the same. Ours is a simple little service—a hymn to cheer, a prayer to help, a few words of encouragement for the stumbling or overburdened brother on the way."

Donald had accepted the invitation thus delicately conveyed, and had been amazed at the mixture of races in the congregation. Americans proper, native-born or fully assimilated immigrants, were in the minority. Most of those present were simply the raw material of citizenship, assembled from every corner of the world—Mexicans, Europeans and Asiatics, Jews and Gentiles—in every shade of complexion and every variety of national costume, men of a dozen languages and a score of creeds. And all had been drawn to Bethlehem, from their homes

clustered around, for the joy of singing together an evening hymn in the great new land of freedom, which for the elders might amount to little more than a refuge from persecution or poverty, but for the children was an inspiration that would in the end mean to America a new race ready for gradual absorption, bringing new blood-corpuscles, new brain-cells, new thoughts and new dreams into the already diversified mentality of the most composite of nations on the face of God's wide earth.

With Donald, as he mused that night, the chapel scene at Bethlehem remained as a wonderful and ineffaceable memory which he felt would abide with him for the rest of his days.

Then he had come upstairs to the sleeping rooms, and although there were none but bright and cheerful faces around, none but pleasant and cordial "good nights" passing from lip to lip, he was dimly conscious that others among the guests of Bethlehem's lodging house were, like himself, weak or wayward brothers who had fallen by the way, or had bolted from the straight path, but were here fighting the good fight and living the good life anew, under the influence of such noble and unselfish characters as John Dana and his helpers, and strengthened even by their own companionship among themselves—by the common bond of loving-kindness received, and in point of honor to be passed along.

And even that very first night of the year of nights Donald was to spend in Bethlehem, he realized how well and happily had the place been named. As his eyes closed to the last twinkling of the stars above and the curtains of peaceful sleep were drawn around him, the rescued vagrant was just wrapped in the thankful consciousness that the song of the mission bells, his dear old mother's song, had guided his footsteps, through pain and humiliation, at times almost in spite of himself, to the shelter of a veritable hostelry of God.

CHAPTER X

TEMPERING THE STEEL

It was the morning after the evening of his arrival in Bethlehem, and, breakfast over, Donald was seated with Mr. Dana in the sanctum that served as an office, a place of retreat when a few minutes of quiet were required during the strenuous day, or, as now, a secluded corner where intimate conversation could be held.

"No, Donald," Dana was saying, "I do not need, nor do I want, to hear anything about the past that might pain or shame you. The past is dead and to be forgotten—at least, the unpleasant part of it. Bright and fond memories are to be cherished, but the others must be put resolutely aside. There is no good in brooding, no benefit in undue repining, for we have always to remember that even sin may have its divine purpose in strengthening the character, in awakening the heart sympathies, in stirring to an unselfish and ennobled life the man who has come through the fiery ordeal."

The speaker pushed back his chair, rose, and approached his companion.

"So smile and be happy, Donald," he went on, "and use the past only as a guiding experience for the future. The present is the golden moment, the all-important moment that counts, for by our present acts and thoughts we mold our future, just as certainly as the modeler molds the clay under his hands."

Donald was listening gravely, absorbing every word.

"All this is so new to me," he murmured. "As a boy, I was brought up by my father in a strict and stern Presbyterian school, and the very text that hung over my bed was forever warning me that 'The wages of sin is death.'"

"Your father is dead?"

"Long ago. I was only twelve when he died."

"And your mother?"

"Thank God, is still alive."

"That is good. It is well for a man to think of his mother just as often as he can. A mother's love is like the very love of God, and, even after she has gone, it should influence a son's heart all through his life."

"I know it. I have realized it these last few days as I never realized it before."

"And the moment that realization came, Donald, you were saved for better things. Now about your father, strict and stern, you say——"

"No," interrupted Donald; "he was not that. He was kind and gentle as a woman. It was his religious views that were strict and stern."

"Your father was a Scot, as I can guess from your name. He taught the religion he himself had been taught in the days of his youth. Remember that the Scottish Presbyterians had through several generations a hard and stern fight for their religion, and their struggles, even though successful, left them hard and stern. But all that is passing, Donald. The Bible itself is being read with kindlier eyes. Take that very text of your boyhood memory—'The wages of sin is death.' Don't you see now that the wages of sin may be reward, if the sin is thrown aside?"

"Donald," he continued, resuming his seat and leaning across the table, "to-day you are a better and a stronger man than you ever were before, and a more useful man to your fellowmen, for the very reason that

you have been tried in the furnace. Before, you were the soft iron that could be bent in the hands of the tempter, dented by every blow. Now, you are the tempered steel. Just count the past, Donald, as having worked to this splendid end. And let me tell you, you are the man I need here—you can make yourself my right hand."

"Show me how I can help, and by the Lord I'll do it!" exclaimed Donald, his face lit with the fire of resolution. "But of course I've got to earn my own living now," he added, holding forth his strong clenched hands.

"Surely, you'll earn your living, Donald, and help me at the same time. There is a job waiting for you in one of the ironworks here—this morning I have already telephoned. If you take it, that will bring you two dollars a day from the start, and perhaps more later on."

"Take it? I'm ready to pull off my coat straightaway."

"To-morrow will do. We'll spend this first day together, for I want to show you how, while you work for your bread and butter during the day, you can help me at other times.'

"I'm your man, Mr. Dana."

"I am sure of it. Now, as we have mentioned wages, I'll ask you if the following arrangement will be all right: Your room here will be one dollar and seventy-five cents a week."

"That's not enough for all I get with the room."

"The figure is a fair one, Donald, and you'll find the meals in the coffee club pretty close to cost price. You will be happy, I know, in paying your way. But you must save some money—there are clothes to be bought, the railway fare for St. Louis to be put by, and lots of other incidental things that will crop up."

"A few dollars each week to my mother," suggested Donald. "She mayn't exactly need them, but they will add to her comfort in many little ways."

"Good!" exclaimed Dana, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. "A few dollars for the dear old mother make the best savings bank a young man ever had—he can lay up treasures in that way which will bring him the biggest dividends of happiness money ever earned. Now you'll want a little money for immediate requirements. Put these dollars in your pocket—ten—I got them from the cashier for you."

"No; please no!" protested Donald. "I'll rub along somehow." Then another thought crossed his mind, and with an abashed look he added: "You are willing, sir, to trust me with such a sum?"

"Indeed I am, Donald," replied Dana brightly and with an encouraging touch on the shoulder. "To trust a friend is the very foundation stone of good and useful comradeship, to trust oneself the very fountain source of strength and resolute will. And I give you all my trust, brother, precisely because I know that now you trust yourself. But this is verging again on forbidden ground. Get rid of the thought, Donald, once and for all, that there is anything which puts me on a different level to yourself. We are just soldiers together, shoulder to shoulder, marching along."

"You're mighty kind," murmured the young man gratefully.

"So about the money," continued Dana, "you will be obliging me by taking it. In any case, these ten dollars are only an advance until the end of the month. The amount is already charged against you in the books. This afternoon you will have to get a pair of boots—there are some as good as new in our own warehouse. Then you'll want overalls, and leather gloves too I was told this morning, for you're to be put into the structural steel department, where they saw and handle heavy and sharp-edged iron beams. How will that suit you?"

"Fine! I want to move big weights. That's just how I feel."

"Well," laughed Dana, "the whole thing's settled. Now for my claim on your services. In the evenings here, Donald, I wish to put you next several young fellows not nearly so strong in determination as yourself. Then I want you on the social club committee—to get acquainted with everybody, to find out how each can help in his or her own way to make an evening pass pleasantly. Later on, perhaps, I'll be glad to have you study our workshop system, and give me the benefit of your advice. These are just a few of the things that can make you invaluable and indispensable to me."

A flash of enthusiasm and pride enkindled Donald's eyes, and his words came with impassioned fervor:

"Won't I try to help you! It will be the very joy of my life, Mr. Dana."

"I believe you. That is why I said from the first that you are the very man I wanted—my chosen and trusted right hand.'

"There is one thing I think I should mention," said Donald, with a returning show of embarrassment. "You heard my name at Riverside—you think it is Donald Smith."

"Well, it is the man that counts with me, not the name."

"But I don't want you to think any the worse of me because that is not my right name. Let me explain, sir, how it happened. When the sheriff that night entered the complaint against me in a book, he asked my name. I said—'Donald'; and then I paused, and hung my head, for, as there is a God above, I was ashamed, sir, to dishonor my father's name or disgrace my mother's. And the sheriff just added the name 'Smith' without another word from me. He called me 'Donald Smith' of his own accord."

"Good old Pete Rushton!" exclaimed Dana enthusiastically. "A kind heart, and a true reader of character every time!"

"Then there was nothing wrong or really mean?"

"No. The point was settled for you, and by law, as I happen to know, you were entitled to plead under the name in which the charge was entered. So put that thought away, with the other disagreeable things. It is satisfactory for you to know that you saved your father's and mother's honored name."

"Well, I feel better after letting you know this," said Donald, his brightened face evidencing his relief of mind. "Let me tell you now, sir—Donald Brodie is my name."

"All right, Brodie," laughed Dana. "But you're just going to be Donald to me all the time. And if I'm not mistaken it will be Donald with everyone in the house, and at the works, and wherever you go. But we'll put it down as Donald Brodie on the concert programs, for I know you can sing."

"You seem to read a fellow like a book," was the smiling reply. "Not that I can claim to be a singer. But my mother taught me a lot of Scottish songs, and she liked to hear me sing them in the old home."

"Then you'll sing them again to us, Donald, in this your present home. Now we'll get away. To-day I want to show you a little of Los Angeles—the garden city of the Pacific Coast, as we all delight to call it. And later on I'm going to take you of a Saturday afternoon to the beautiful beach towns, and I'll see whether we can't arrange for an occasional day off from the works, so that you may come with me to such places as San Diego and Redlands and up among the mountains. In that way you'll learn what California and life in California really mean. You see, I move around quite a little in connection with our work for Bethlehem, and if you were with me there are a dozen ways in which you could help. By the bye, there's just one other thing, Donald."

"What is that?"

"To-night you'll write to your mother, and tell her you are safe and well and coming home to her in good time, perhaps to bring her out to sunny California, who can say?"

"I had already made up my mind to write, Mr. Dana, and I'm going to let her know about you and all your goodness to me, a stranger—and worse."

"No, no, Donald; that last word breaks the rules I have just been laying down. There is nothing in the world so precious as a friend, and in you I have found a friend."

"For life," said Donald fervently.

"And when you write your mother, ask her to send you her photograph, and with that and a few other things we'll brighten up your room so that it will seem home to you while you're here, and you'll remember it with pleasure when you are gone. Now, we really must make a move. We'll have lots of quiet talks over the chessboard of an evening. If you don't play chess, I'll teach you."

"Oh, I can play, just a little."

"Then I've met my conqueror, for sure," laughed Dana. "The man who plays 'just a little' always turns out to be a master of the game."

Next day Donald, wearing overalls and big leather gauntlets, was at work among the structural steel, handling heavy I-beams, tees, and channels, amidst the deafening scream of the electric saw which, with milled edge like a dollar, cut and trimmed the iron as if it were so much cheese.

In the evening, in the boys' playroom, he was laughing over the spectacle of a little Roumanian lad, less than ten years old and hardly able to pronounce the words, lustily singing "Land where my fathers died"! A youngster standing by, resenting either the pirated patriotism or the mangled melody, interposed. "Shut

yer mug, or I'll knock yer block off!" was his unceremonious and vigorous interdiction. Donald ascertained that this young product of the eighth ward of Los Angeles was a newspaper seller by day—"a newsy," he called himself—a keen business lad, and the mainstay of a fatherless home. Donald's first and readily accomplished task was to make the two boys friends, and thereafter for an hour he was busy giving both those young Americans, the son of the soil and the son from across the seas, their first lesson in the English language. The lads trotted off together for their homes, in blithe companionship and with an appointment for the next night, when the course of study was to be resumed.

Then Donald played Mr. Dana a game of chess, and, as the latter had foreseen, pretty well wiped him off the board. Later, in the social room, he was singing "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," in a pleasant baritone and with tenderness of feeling that showed he had the singer's soul as well as the singer's voice.

Bethlehem sat up; there was a vague feeling in the atmosphere that someone had arrived.

A month passed, and Donald Brodie was promoted foreman in the structural steel department, with four dollars a day as his wage. At Bethlehem he had become the presiding spirit in the varied evening diversions. The Rev. John Dana could rest a bit and look on, and his happy face beamed more happily than ever.

During those early days at Bethlehem only one figure from out the past that was to be forgotten crossed Donald's path. But it loomed up merely as a brief and quickly vanishing vision.

One night, returning from his work, Donald encountered the yeggman, standing outside a saloon amidst a group of loafers of his kind. A flash of mutual recognition passed, and the yeggman, with a smile of sardonic friendliness, took a forward step.

But Donald, head erect, moved calmly on. With him the old vague dread of pursuit had lost its power. And the yeggman, on his side, was quick to realize that his malign influence was gone. His alert eye had read the signs of changed times—the fearless bearing of his erstwhile victim, the empty lunch-box swung in one hand, the face smudged with the ironworker's honorable stains of toil.

"The kid's workin', I'll be damned!" muttered the hardened vagabond, as he shot a last look of deep disgust and impotent malice at the young mechanic's disappearing form.

Except for this one incident, the full year ran to its close in unbroken tranquillity, and now the day of separation had come. Mr. Dana accompanied Donald to the railway depot. All Bethlehem would have mustered to wave him good-by, but the departing guest would not have it so. He wanted in that last hour to be alone with his leader and friend, the man who in this single year had done more to mold his character and influence his life than all the men added together with whom, since childhood days, he had come into association.

But Donald and Dana had little to say—there was little to be said. Both thoroughly understood each other; no need of thanks from the one side nor of exhortations from the other.

When the cry of "All aboard!" came and the locomotive bell was sounding its warning note, when the last hand grip had been given and the last farewell spoken, there was the gleam of moisture in both men's eyes.

Donald was standing now on the platform between two coaches; the train was in motion.

"Remember, I hope to get east to that New York conference in the fall," cried Dana. "I'll stop off a

day in St. Louis, Donald, and we'll have another game of chess."

The train had glided past, the conductor had swung himself on to the rear coach, the clang of the bell had faded away, the friends of the departed travelers were dispersing, and the leader of Bethlehem stood alone. For a moment he felt alone.

But he bestirred himself, and with a cheery smile to a passing brakeman hurried away.

"Thank God, there is still plenty of work to be done," were his murmured words.

Meanwhile Donald was speeding eastward to join his mother once again, to renew the sacred ties, to bring joy and happiness to the faithful heart that had sorrowed on his account but had never wavered in its love. He was speeding eastward through the smiling valleys of plenty, onward toward the desert whence in his drifting, derelict days he had come—no longer the slinking, miserable hobo clinging to the rods of a freight-car, but a man—every inch a man—with the hallmark of serene living on his brow, the easy poise of perfect health, the quiet reserve of real strength both of muscles and of will, a man of obvious destiny among his fellowmen, the proudly conscious master of his fate and captain of his soul.

END OF BOOK I

BOOK II

THE WORKER

"Then scatter seeds of kindness,
For our reaping by and by."

CHAPTER I

AWAITING THE ABSENT ONE

"Norah, where in cloudland have you dropped from at last?"

The speaker was a young woman who had jumped up from a reclining chair, throwing her book aside, at the unexpected appearance of her visitor. The latter had approached the broad screened verandah by the lawn it overlooked, and was standing at the top of the short flight of steps before her coming had been observed. On her face was a demure smile, as she stretched forth both hands in affectionate greeting.

"Yes, home at last. Leslie, and right from cloudland, as you say."

"It's ages since I've even heard from you. But I'm becoming accustomed to your prolonged disappearances. Where have you been this time?"

"Oh, still doing California, as I said I would. This time it has been the giant forest of the Sierra Nevada. Oh, you poor little stay-at-home! You cannot conceive the magnificence of that mountain scenery."

While speaking, the young girl—she had just crossed the borderland of the twenties—had drawn off her long gloves, and was now carefully stretching them into shape. This completed to her satisfaction, she laid them on a cane table near at hand, and proceeded to remove her broad-brimmed hat with its sweeping white ostrich

plumes. She was jabbing the daggerlike jeweled hatpins into the dainty framework as she continued:

"Square mile after square mile of mighty sequoias that were monarchs of the forest before King Cheops began to build his pyramid by the Nile. Just think of it! The oldest living things on earth, sentinels of the centuries, silent witnesses of all the ages in the recorded history of man. Oh, the secrets that must be locked up in their thick-barked hearts of redwood!"

Hat and pins had now joined the gloves upon the table, and the sun-browned face of the girl was glowing with enthusiasm that added to its rare charm and beauty. Her tailor-made suit of white serge showed to advantage the well-developed and lissome figure.

"The old redwoods have made you quite a poet, dear," smiled her friend admiringly. She too was a beautiful and handsome girl, but taller and statelier, the contrast emphasized by the dark costume she was wearing.

"Oh, but I can be quite prosaic, too," protested the other, in mock solemnity, dropping into a chair, resting her elbows on her knees, and her chin on the finger-tips of both hands. "If it is figures you want, I can give you them—pat. There is the General Sherman tree, to begin with, one hundred and nine feet in circumference six feet from the ground, two hundred and eighty-five feet in height—I think that's right; I've got it all written down somewhere. And if sawed into lumber, it would yield—well, well, let me see—just ever so many millions of shingles, fence posts, and all sorts of things."

And, sitting up, she laughed merrily at her own arithmetical collapse.

"But really, Leslie, it's just great," she went on, with earnest conviction in voice and look. "Auntie and I went up to the Sierra Camp for a week, and we had stayed a month before we realized it, and then it was another two months before we could make up our minds to take the stage down again. Six thousand five hun-

dred feet high, and it was only the growing chilliness of the nights that brought us back again to San Francisco. Dear old San Francisco!"

With the words of fond attachment, she turned and gazed down upon the great landlocked bay outspread before her like an unrolled chart. The house stood on the commanding eminence of Russian Hill, and in the clear crisp sunshine of a September afternoon the twin headlands of the Golden Gate, the islands, Alcatraz castled with its military prison, the clustered cities across the waters, the background of rolling hills—all the details of the panorama stood forth with the sharply cut outlines of a cameo.

"Dear old San Francisco!" she once more murmured, as her eyes feasted upon the scene, glorious in itself and endeared to her from days of earliest childhood.

"So you are glad to be home again, Norah?" said her companion sympathetically.

"Of course. Always glad to be home again—till the next whimsy for roaming comes along. Auntie declares that I've shown her more of California in the last two years than she ever saw in the fifty preceding. But every Native Daughter of the Golden West should see the whole of our magnificent domain—isn't that right, Leslie?"

"I suppose so."

The words fell with a half sigh, and a look of sadness came into the speaker's soft brown eyes. Leslie Sheldon was a year or two older than her friend Norah Carew. They had been playmates together as children, chums at school and college, and were bosom friends still, although the wandering propensities of the one had of late led to frequent and prolonged periods of separation.

"I forgot, my dear," said Norah, laying a hand on that of her companion. "You are a Native Daughter also, but these days you seem never to take even a week's holiday out of San Francisco."

"Father declares that he dare not leave the works for a single day. You know that, Norah."

"Bother the works! Still the same old trouble with the unions?"

"Growing steadily worse, I'm afraid. Mr. Wilmington tells me privately that the crisis is approaching—that it must be a fight to a finish before the end of another year. Poor old dad!"

"It is Mr. Wilmington, I think, who is to blame. He keeps egging Mr. Sheldon on."

"Oh, no; not that. Father is fighting for a sacred principle, and he would die rather than surrender."

"Sacred principle! That's Arthur Wilmington all over—I can hear the very echo of his words. Peace to me is the most sacred principle of all."

"But not peace that would mean the yielding of one's rights, the acceptance of a brutal tyranny that would make the employer of labor a cringing slave. Never, Norah, never! Father is absolutely right."

The voice rang with conviction, the tall figure straightened itself in proud determination, the wistful sadness but a moment before in the brown eyes had changed to defiant challenge.

"Good old Leslie!" laughed Norah. "In your veins runs the fighting blood of your father."

"I am sorry for father. I wish he had the peace and rest which his long life of hard work deserves."

It was over Norah's face now that the shadow of sadness stole.

"I'm sorry for him too, dear. At such a time he should not be single-handed and alone." Her voice had fallen, and she leaned closer to her friend. "Any more news of Jimmy?" she whispered.

Leslie sighed again. Her eyes were studying the pattern of the bright Persian rug at her feet; she did not raise them while she answered.

"The last was from Budapest—the usual picture card,

with no address or message. But he sailed for New York in August—on one of the Cunard boats."

"He is coming back again? He is coming home?" asked Norah eagerly.

"I cannot say. Mr. Wilmington got the passenger list from the agent he employed in London, and that is all we as yet know."

"He must be coming home," exclaimed the other decisively. "I know it. I dreamed it up among the sequoias." She rose and placed her arm affectionately around Leslie's shoulders.

"We shall hope so," said Leslie quietly, gazing up into the animated face. "We shall hope so, dear. I am trying to get father to speak about Jimmy, to know that he has at last crossed the Atlantic, but at the very first word he closes down upon me instantly. Mr. Wilmington says he is as implacable as ever—that I need never hope for Jimmy to be forgiven."

Norah made a little *moue* of impatience.

"The eternal Mr. Wilmington! I wish to goodness he would mind his own business. When we have got Jimmy safe back here, Leslie dear, I'll see whether Mr. Sheldon won't forgive him. The idea!" Then her face suddenly softened. "Wouldn't it be just great," she murmured, "if he were at the works now to stand by his father's side?"

"It is what should be, Norah. Oh, don't I know it! Am I not ashamed that my only brother should have thrown every sense of duty to the four winds of heaven?"

Norah stooped and pressed her cheek against Leslie's.

"There, don't cry, honey," she said soothingly. "You may be sure he's sorry now. Just keep your mind easy. Jimmy's coming back to you and to us all, and your father will be the very first to get on the telephone and order up the fatted calf for dinner."

CHAPTER II

A GOOD SAMARITAN

"My lad, just slip your arm in mine, and hold on to me. Steady now. See, the policeman is watching."

"Right you are, ol' fellow. We'll have a drink together."

A minute or two later, Donald Brodie had the swaying, staggering figure safely deposited in a chair at the rear of an ice-cream parlor. Without was one of the bustling thoroughfares of St. Louis. It was a sultry afternoon for the month of September, with almost a midsummer blaze of sunshine.

Donald had noticed the youth in a side alley, crawling on hands and knees, evidently flung from the back door of some saloon, and apparently seeking the only patch of shade in sight. The boy—he looked little older than a boy—had stretched himself luxuriously under the shadow of a cart wheel, and was gurgling contentedly, quite willing to take a snooze on this one spot of comparative coolness, utterly indifferent to a dozen jeering ragamuffins swarming around him, unconscious of the slowly approaching policeman already foreseeing the advisability of ringing up the patrol wagon.

At this psychological moment Donald had pressed through the gathering throng, and his prompt intervention had saved the youthful victim of inebriety both from his thoughtless tormentors and from the ride that would have meant a prison tank at the journey's end.

"Too bad," the policeman had said pityingly, as they passed. "You'll look after him, sir?"

"I'll look after him," Donald had promised. "He's a friend of mine," he added—truthfully, for to Donald Brodie, the rescued of Bethlehem, the worker there, every helpless fellow-creature had thenceforth and by right become an object to be compassionated and befriended.

He had given his order to a colored waiter, and was now surveying the human wreck that had drifted into his protecting care. There the youth sat, without a hat, his legs outstretched close together and straight before him, hands thrust in trousers pockets, chin resting on his breast, a beatific smile upon his face.

"A Sco'ch highball! That's the dope. Sco'ch goes every time. Eh, ol' chap?"

The babbling flow of alcoholic friendliness went serenely on, without any call for Donald to express either assent or dissent. He was saddened by the spectacle before him—was already revolving in his mind the next steps that should be taken. The delicately chiseled features of the young face, the natty, well-fitting clothes, the general appearance of refinement despite the handicap of disordered and dust-stained raiment, all combined to make a strong appeal to Donald's heart. In physique the youth was a little fellow; but a bright and handsome little fellow when in his sober senses, his rescuer could well believe.

"What have you been up to, sonnie?" asked Donald, in cheerful and kindly tones. The question was more to gain time than to elicit an answer, for he noted the growing restlessness of his thirsty neighbor.

"Oh, been havin' another little whirl. Hang it all, that nigger must have fallen asleep." And he reached forth a hand and hammered the bell on the little table at his side.

"Here he comes," said Donald quietly, as tray and bearer made their appearance.

"An ordah like that takes some time, boss," grumbled the waiter, as he set down the drinks. One was of a pale amber hue, the other of a deeper golden yellow. The latter Donald placed before his guest and raised his own glass.

"Good luck," he said, with a steady look at the youth.

"Good luck, ol' sport," replied the latter, lurching for the tumbler in front of him, and tossing off its contents.

"Wha'sh that?" he spluttered, as he set down the empty glass, and curiously smacked his lips.

"Pure orange juice," responded Donald, with a smile. "It will do you more good than all the Scotch highballs in the world."

"Oh, shucks! Stung!" murmured the other, casting a glance around. "And this is a blooming ice-cream show! Good lor', I thought it was a bar!"

The ridiculousness of his situation dawned upon him. But he was in good-natured mood, for he laughed aloud, and slapped Donald jovially on the shoulder.

"You're a sport, all right, ol' man, a dead sport, to have sprung that trick on Jimmy Sheldon."

"Well, Jimmy, just listen to reason, like a good fellow," said Donald, gripping the young toper's arm and holding him with his eyes. "You know quite well that if you wander out into the streets again in your present condition, you'll get run in for a certainty, and be up against no end of shame and trouble. My home is only a few blocks away. Come with me, old man, have a rest and a sleep, and pull yourself together."

"But wha' 'bout those highballs? Can't go all the af'noon without a drink—abs'lutely imposh'ble."

"We'll take something home with us, Jimmy. Trust me, my boy, as you have never trusted man before—for your own sake, trust me. Come, we'll go now."

As if under a resistless dominant spell, the youth rose. He was even now a little steadier on his feet.

"All right, ol' man. We'll take a bottle home. Come 'long."

Arm in arm they left the ice-cream parlor.

"Nevah got an ordah befo' for a whole tumblerful of orange juice straight," soliloquized the colored waiter, as he pocketed the tip Donald had slipped into his hand and watched the receding figures. "That young fellah's got a load for sure."

At the corner of the street was a family liquor store, its window filled with gaily labeled bottles in rows and adorned with highly colored oleographs depicting cool and well-stocked wine cellars, foaming steins of beer, and other seductive allurements for the bibulous passer-by. Jimmy ranged himself against the plate glass.

"Remember the whisky—wha'sh your name? Wait till I get some coin."

He began to fumble in a trousers pocket. There was a period of silence—a murmur of surprise.

"Where's my money gone?" he went on, proceeding now with both hands to search through all his garments. "Well, I'll be jiggered! Not a dime left!" And he looked up at his companion, dolefully yet half-amusedly.

"Somebody's rolled me, right enough," he chuckled.

"Well, never mind that just now," replied Donald. "Jimmy, I never break my word, and, if you still insist, I'll get a flask of whisky here. But I want some oranges, too—there's a fruit store further along."

"All right, ol' bird," assented Jimmy, turning in the lining of a waistcoat pocket. "You'll take the oranges and I'll take the whisky." And he reached out again for the steadying arm.

"We'll see," said Donald, with an enigmatic smile.

Donald Brodie's home was in a quiet tree-shaded side street, one of a long row of tiny double-storied houses, each with its patch of green lawn and a small front porch

approached by half a dozen steps. Seated on the porch, amidst a brave show of pot plants and flowering vines, and with a bright brass cage swinging overhead from which came the piping notes of a canary, was a woman whose age might have been anything between fifty and sixty, for though her hair was gray her cheeks were a clear pink and white, full almost with the fullness of youth, her forehead too with scarce a wrinkle. She was dressed in a black gown, relieved by dainty white lace around the neck.

When Donald, with his hatless companion holding on to one arm and a big paper sack of oranges carried on the other, came into view along the street, she rose and watched, with some anxiety yet with dawning comprehension.

"A friend, mother—Mr. Sheldon—wanting an hour's rest. I'm taking him to my room."

That was all Donald said as the two men stepped indoors. Jimmy looked rather shamefaced when, in passing, he met the old lady's quiet gaze; but he bowed, and murmured as best he could a courteous "How do you do?"

"Puir weak laddie!" she said to herself, when the door had closed. "And he looks quite genteel. I think I'll go ben and make a cup of good strong tea. That'll help him."

It was the Saturday half holiday, and through the remainder of the afternoon the good Samaritan sat by the couch on which the waif that fortune had thrown in his way had stretched himself. After the tea had been partaken of, with but lukewarm appreciation on the visitor's part, Donald with infinite patience kept up an aimless conversation, filled mainly with rambling, sometimes almost incoherent, reminiscences from Jimmy's side of adventures and so-called "good times" in London, Paris, Vienna, and half a dozen other European cities. There had been more than one call for whisky.

But the flask stood on the table, its capsule intact, its cork still undrawn, for through Donald's tactful persuasion or compelling influence each time an orange had been made to do service for a drink. As hour succeeded hour, the talk of the youth grew more rational, and between times there came restful periods of silence. Then, in the falling darkness of the night, Jimmy fell asleep.

Donald threw a robe over the recumbent figure, put the flask away in a little cupboard, and, leaving the door of the room open, tiptoed downstairs. In the parlor below he found his mother.

"He is worth the saving, mother dear," said Donald, as he sat down beside her. "It will mean a week's nursing, but he's worth it, I'm sure. Comes of some good family, quarreled with his father, and has had a wild time pretty well all over Europe, blowing in a little fortune left him in his own right by his mother's will."

"A motherless wean," commented Mrs. Brodie pityingly.

"But he has a sister of whom he is very fond and proud. Mother, mother, the old mission bells that brought me back to you are ringing. We must make that boy fit and well, and send him safe home to his friends."

"I'm with you, Donald," she replied, putting her arms fondly around her big stalwart son and drawing him to her breast. "I'll help you all I can. We'll pass God's good work along. But come and have your supper now. It's been waiting a long time."

Night had fallen in St. Louis, but in San Francisco the westering sun was still above the Golden Gate. Two men had joined the girls on the verandah of the beautiful home on the heights of Russian Hill—its owner, Richard Sheldon, and his friend, Arthur Wilmington. The former was a tall man, spare of person, his neatly trimmed Vandyke beard quite white, but his eyes clear,

determined looking, full of fire. By his side the smooth-shaven banker appeared rotund and unctuous.

They were a merry little group around the afternoon tea table, for Norah, whose place was evidently that of a second daughter in the household, had been recounting an amusing experience wherein her old maiden aunt had come face to face with a brown bear amid the sequoias, and had scared the big lumbering animal into ignominious retreat by her shrill screams and the involuntary waggling of her Chinese parasol.

"Aunt Octavia lost the chance of her life for a real good masculine hug," laughed Norah, at the close of her vivaciously told story.

Mr. Sheldon, standing behind the young girl's chair, playfully pinched her ear.

"You are the same little madcap, I see," he remarked; then, when the laughter had subsided, he went on: "We have missed your music all these months. Won't you give us a song now?"

"Oh, there is hardly time. Auntie will be thinking that I have been swallowed by the bear. I said I would be gone only twenty minutes, and I've been here two hours or more."

"Then five minutes longer won't make much difference," suggested Wilmington. "A song, Norah; by all means let us have a song."

With frank good-nature she rose and tripped through an open French casement leading from the verandah. Mr. Sheldon followed her. Wilmington drew his chair a little closer to Leslie's; his eyes rested with all the complacency of ownership on the beautiful girl in the first bloom of young womanhood. But Leslie was gazing away toward the Golden Gate, at the crimson and empurpled flush of the setting sun.

"What shall it be, Mr. Sheldon?" asked Norah, as she took her seat at the grand piano. In the dim twi-

light of the curtained music-room her white-robed figure shone forth conspicuously.

"Any of your old favorites, my dear," said Mr. Sheldon, as he settled himself in an easy-chair.

A few preliminary chords were struck, and then, in a rich contralto voice, arose the song:

"Bonnie Charlie's noo awa' "—

And, when the refrain came round, it was the very soul of the singer that sent forth the impassioned appeal:

"Will ye no come back again?"

Out on the verandah Leslie understood the full meaning of the song, for her lips trembled. But she still kept her eyes on the deepening sunset glow, while Wilmington watched with undisguised admiration the play of light and emotion on the irradiated countenance.

In St. Louis Donald had returned to his vigil by the sleeping youth. Jimmy stirred restlessly; he was dreaming, for the murmured name "Norah" fell on Donald's ear.

CHAPTER III

FIRST INFLUENCES

Mrs. Brodie took Jimmy in hand, in quiet motherly fashion. For several days the invalid—he was treated as an invalid—was kept in bed, and put on a diet of soups and milk puddings, oranges and grapes. Mrs. Brodie habitually had a sweet smile and a pleasant word, but there were times when her look could become sternly grave and her very silence spoke volumes. Jimmy obeyed her like a lamb.

On the Sunday morning Donald had gone to the Planters Hotel, with a note from Jimmy, and had been admitted to the latter's suite of rooms. On the dressing table he had seen ivory-backed brushes and silver-topped bottles; in the closets a dozen suits of clothes; thrown over the foot-rail of the bed a silk kimono dainty enough for some Madame Butterfly; strewn around everywhere the elegant and luxurious evidences of wealth lavished on the gratification of refined tastes and extravagant habits. He had contented himself with selecting a suit of pajamas, some underwear and linen, brushes, safety razor, bath sponge, a pair of slippers, and the least new-looking hat from among a bunch of four or five. In the presence of the clerk, who had accompanied him upstairs, he had stowed these articles in one of their owner's valises and announced that Mr. Sheldon would be back to the hotel in a few days.

While keeping his patient company, Brodie had spent the afternoon in reading, not from the voluminous Sunday newspapers stuffed with more or less ephemeral matter, but from a book, and this book evidently one deserving and requiring the closest attention. For a couple of hours or more he had been seated at the table in studious attitude, the volume opened before him, notebook and pencil at his hand. Jimmy had been watching for some time, curiously, but in silence.

"What are you reading, old fellow?" he at last asked, propping himself up with an elbow on his pillow. "A book! I used to read books when a boy, but never after I entered college."

"This is a history of medieval India under Mohammedan rule," replied Donald, raising his eyes with an amused smile.

"Great Cæsar's ghost! How do you come to be reading stuff like that? You told me you're a working man."

"And don't many working men read good books, Jimmy? More than you would imagine, my boy. The working classes have been taught to read and to think these days, and I venture to say they make better use of the public libraries than the average business man who counts himself their superior in point of education."

"But why the dickens should a working man of America be bothering himself about medieval India?"

"I'll tell you just why," explained Donald, leaning across the table, and with hand raised to enforce his points. "I happened to read the other day a newspaper editorial denouncing British rule in India. It seemed to me on the face of it a cheap style of criticism, written with no real knowledge of the subject, and with no grasp of the difficult problems involved. My father, who came from the old country, had always taught me that one of the grandest and most wonderful things ever achieved by the British race was the establishment of a firm and

352091B

just government in India with its swarming humanity, its scores of fighting races who had been cutting each other's throats for centuries, and its many bitterly fanatical creeds, each holding all the others in hatred and contempt."

Donald paused, reached for his tobacco jar, and began to fill his briar-root. Without lighting it, he resumed:

"Now, Jimmy, the early history of British rule in India belongs to America just as much as to Great Britain, and therefore as an American I am interested in what is really my own country's early history. But most of all I am interested in the truth, and I felt sure that that newspaper writer was wrong in his statements mainly because he was ignorant of the facts of the case. I wanted to get at these facts, so I chose the best book I could find to give me a picture of India as it existed before the British established their sway."

With wondering eyes, Sheldon looked at this plain working man of St. Louis who spoke such words.

"What a thorough chap you are!" he murmured, in genuine admiration.

"I don't mean to say," went on Donald, as he struck a match and continued between the puffs, "that the British went into India with any higher motives than their own territorial extension and commercial gain. But it was in the divine scheme of mankind's evolution that these very motives, by starting an unending chain of events, should lead to beneficent results far beyond the dreams of the men who first essayed the task of bringing order and good government out of the blood-stained chaos of native rule—or rather a hundred warring native rules, as this very volume shows."

He had risen to his feet and was pacing the room, but paused now to tap with his finger-tips the book upon the table.

"My word, Brodie," said Jimmy eagerly, sitting up

in bed, "you would get a lectureship in a university if you only applied."

"Are you really interested in such thoughts?" asked Donald, the animation on his face attesting his own delight in awakening and holding the young fellow's attention. He laid down the unfinished pipe and resumed his seat.

"Well, rest back comfortably there on your pillows, and listen while I read a few pages. Here I am, in the midst of the fighting among Shah Jehan's sons."

"That was the great Moghul emperor who built the Taj Mahal at Agra," interposed Jimmy, pleased at the chance to contribute intelligently to the conversation. "I've seen it—the most beautiful thing ever created by human hands."

"You've had great luck to visit these actual scenes."

"Yes; but what you tell me now shows how very little I understood of all I saw. I say, wouldn't it be fine if we could make a tour of India together some day?"

Donald smiled at the unlikelihood of the realization of such a dream.

"Well, Jimmy," he resumed, "Shah Jehan, as you doubtless know, was deposed by his son Aurungzebe, and probably murdered by him a few years later when being held in captivity. And Aurungzebe, mark you, was only doing pretty much what his father had done before him. Both were men of mighty intellect, benevolent-hearted in their own way, but it would look as if, when they began to reign, their sole hope of holding their position was to plunge their arms elbow-deep into the blood of their own kith and kin. Now listen; you'll soon pick up the thread of the story."

And so the afternoon had passed, Brodie reading aloud and making occasional comments, while Jimmy, indolently listless, but mentally alert now that his head was cleared of alcoholic fumes, hearkened to the unfolding of a great human drama of two hundred and fifty

years ago about which, up to the present, he had known virtually nothing.

The book at last was closed, with Aurungzebe securely seated on the Peacock Throne, his brothers and all the princes of his house who were possible rivals either slain or rendered helpless by the red-hot iron having been passed before their eyes.

"Now, Jimmy," remarked Donald, in final summing up, "there's the sort of thing that British rule in India replaced. And don't you think it is worth while going from the newspaper article to the real facts?"

"Worth while," he exclaimed fervently, "I should say! And, apart from the thrilling story, Brodie, you've taught me a lesson to-day which I'll never forget for the rest of my life."

"Well, it's good to have a listener like you," was Donald's appreciative response. "I like to speak about the things I read. It fixes them so much better as a picture in one's brain. But it needs two minds in sympathy to make discussion pleasant and profitable. So the benefit has been mine as much as yours."

"It is jolly decent of you to put it that way," replied young Sheldon gratefully.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday Donald was absent at his work from early morning until supper time. But his mother was in charge of the patient, and pampered him both forenoon and afternoon with an hour or two of reading. She selected from her son's book shelves one of her own childhood favorites, and Jimmy in following the adventures and vicissitudes of the Scottish Chiefs was introduced to a simple, old-fashioned style of romance that at times made him furtively wipe his eyes while the reader herself was wiping her glasses. And with the instinct of the true feuilletonist she invariably ended with a chapter that left her listener on the tenterhooks of uncertainty and expectation.

"Come on, Mrs. Brodie, just another chapter," pleaded the convalescent.

"No, no, my laddie; that's enough for to-day. You see, I mustn't try your nerves too much," she added, with a sly twinkle in her eye. "Besides, we're going to shift you to-night into the next room. This is Donald's bedroom, you know, that you've been occupying."

"Oh, I am so sorry! What a nuisance I must have been!"

"Not a bit! Donald thought it best for you to bide here, where he's accustomed himself to sit up at night among his books and papers. But the spare room's all ready, and you'll take that from now on. It's every bit as comfortable."

"You don't need to tell me that, Mrs. Brodie."

"And now, as I was saying, you've got to get up and dress, for Donald said you were to come downstairs for supper to-night. He's going to take you to the coffee club."

"The what?" exclaimed Jimmy, in undisguised surprise.

"The coffee club. Has he never told you that he's at the head of a coffee club for newspaper laddies? Three times a week he goes round after his own supper, and it was only because you were here and on his hands that he got a friend to take his place last Monday night."

"Yes, I guess I have been on his hands," he murmured, in regretful self-reproach, casting his eyes around the room from which its rightful occupant had been dispossessed.

"There, now, don't take me up like that!" snapped Mrs. Brodie, in pretended anger, her forefinger pointed to give added emphasis to the rebuke. "It's been a real pleasure for Donald to have you here. And I've grown kind o' fond o' you mysel', laddie," she went on, lapsing into the broad and kindly doric of her youth. "I never

had but the one bairn, and it's aboot time, I'm thinking, I should have anither, just to keep my hand in."

She had stepped up to the bed, and was pulling the counterpane straight, adjusting the pillows, mothering him as if he had been veritably a sick child.

"But you'll enjoy the coffee club," she proceeded cheerfully. "They're fine wee fellows, some of those newsboys."

"He's not thinking of making me a member, is he?" asked Jimmy, with a quizzical smile.

"Oh, I shouldn't wonder," chuckled Mrs. Brodie. "You see, helpers are needed to amuse the boys, and it's just sometimes one like yourself that can make them laugh to beat the band."

The compliment was a dubious one, and he was searching the old lady's sparkling eyes to get at the true meaning of her words. But she gave no clue as to whether she had spoken in satire or sober earnest.

"But there, go along with you," she continued. "Here am I sorting your bed when I should be putting a bow to your necktie. Donald will be home in less than an hour, and if we aren't both spry he will catch you unshaved and my dinner uncooked. You'll find all your things handy on the dresser, Mr. Sheldon."

"Oh, please call me Jimmy, Mrs. Brodie."

"All right, Jimmy. But Jimmies can be ordered about, recollect, and have always got to obey. So put your best foot foremost, laddie."

All three sat down to supper for the first time together. Jimmy noted, with appreciation but no longer with surprise, the fine napery, the forks and spoons of solid silver and ancient pattern, the old-fashioned tea-service of delicate porcelain complete in every detail and manifestly a family heirloom. He had already realized that, if the Brodies were of the working class, they were also of good old stock, with refinement bred in the very

bone. Although Mrs. Brodie had cooked and served the dinner, it chancing to be the inalienable afternoon and evening off for her Swedish help, she was none the less the true lady in her home, and while Donald assisted her in many ways, it was without loss of his manly dignity. Before the end of the meal, the guest also was lending a hand to lighten the tasks of his hostess, and his tentative unobtrusive services were rewarded by a kind motherly smile. Garnished with the sweets and savories of mutual helpfulness, brightened with cheerful conversation, the dinner was a more enjoyable one, young Sheldon felt, than any he had ever eaten at Delmonico's or the Café de Paris.

CHAPTER IV

THE COFFEE CLUB

During the progress of the meal Donald had invited Jimmy to accompany him to the coffee club about which Mrs. Brodie had already spoken. On their way Brodie explained how every evening the newsboys of the district who had no real homes to go to assembled in a large room behind a carpenter's shop, brewed their own coffee in a big urn, and were regaled with sandwiches supplied by a near-by saloon-keeper from the overflow of his free-lunch counter.

"You see," said Donald, "all saloon-keepers are not bad. They are in a bad business, no doubt, but of many among them that's the worst that can be said. Tim Murphy, who helps me with the grub, is the soul of kindness, and would do all he could to keep these street urchins from learning to drink. He doesn't come around himself, and his generous act is known only to a very few, not even to the boys. Another man and myself take turn about in helping the youngsters to run their club in an orderly way. There are only two inflexible rules—clean hands and faces, and no swearing. Here we are, Jimmy. Come right in. They may be a job lot of kids, but there's good timber in the bunch, as you'll soon see."

It wanted ten or fifteen minutes of eight o'clock, the appointed supper hour, and the club was not in session. Two lads, in their regular turn of duty, were presiding over the steaming coffee urn. Two others had set the table—plain deal boards placed on trestles—at the head of which a big napkin covered a goodly pile of comestibles. At the further end of the room several boys were busy washing their hands and switching their coats. Others were arriving in eager haste not to be late, and the first objective of each newcomer, after his bundle of unsold papers had been deposited in a corner, was the lavatory basin.

Donald, after introducing Jimmy as his friend, entered into conversation with two or three groups of the boys. Their bright faces and their respectful yet frankly fearless bearing showed that they regarded him as a kind big brother and protector. More than one of the lads had promptly buttonholed him for advice on some knotty problem of the day's experiences.

At last eight o'clock chimed from a neighboring church tower, and at the first stroke of the well-known signal the boys ranged themselves along both sides of the table. All remained standing until Donald had completed a round of inspection. Clothes might be ragged, but the lesson of personal cleanliness had been well learned, for there was no need to send anyone back for a second application of soap and water.

The serving of the meal was conducted with systematic orderliness. The two boys at the coffee urn filled the mugs and brought them to the table, while another couple carried and set down the plates laden with good things—buttered rolls, sandwiches, slices of cold meat, potato salad—no broken victuals, but everything dainty as in a well-conducted restaurant. The funds of the club provided the generous wedges of apple pie that closed the feast. Donald at the head of the table, with Jimmy seated at his side, had nibbled a sandwich for

the sake of good-fellowship. But it was well that they had come with hunger satisfied, for of the bulging heap beneath the napkin there now remained only a scanty breakfast of crumbs for the sparrows in the back yard.

During supper there had been free and unrestrained conversation, jests, and good-natured badinage flung across the board, a humorous story or two that had commanded general attention and elicited general laughter. Young Sheldon entirely forgot himself in watching the strange scene, studying the shrewd sharp physiognomies ranged round the table, catching the quick expressive repartee, ungrammatical often, vulgar at times, but occasionally pat and clever as the carefully prepared dialogue of a stage-play. He had many a time before joshed a newspaper boy, and taken the joshing back with compound interest. But this was his first glimpse of *la vie intime* of the peddlers of the curb.

At the close of the meal, Donald called for a recitation, and a little tad of a fellow responded with a Jewish colloquy between a supposed father and his son that made the audience scream with laughter, the fact that the boy himself was quite obviously of the persuasion whose foibles he was hitting off adding to the humor of the situation.

Then Donald called for a song—"a song with a chorus, please"—and in a trice the popular refrain of the day was making the very rafters ring. With this the proceedings terminated, for some of the youngsters had considerable distances to travel before they would reach their places of abode.

Cheery good-nights had been spoken; Donald had shaken each boy's hand, addressing here and there a kindly word of inquiry about a sick father or a crippled sister; Jimmy had received more than one diffident "Glad to have met you, sir," or "Hope you'll come again"; the bundles, big or small, of newspaper returns

had been shouldered, and with their owners had disappeared into the night; and only two of the oldest lads remained behind to clear away the débris of the feast.

"You see the good work Tim Murphy's doing," remarked Donald, as the young men took their hats in hand.

"And you—you," thought Jimmy; but he did not speak the words. "It's a splendid school for good citizenship," was his reply.

On the way home he gripped Donald's arm, this time in comradeship. He walked along in silence. He was pondering over things. For him there was opening up a new world—a new and hitherto undreamed-of world, a world of true brotherhood that had all the time been free of access, but whose living wonders and beauties had until now remained unseen and unexplored.

CHAPTER V

A NEW DEPARTURE

When Brodie returned from his work next evening, Jimmy had a proposal to make. They were upstairs in the latter's room.

"I have been considering things all day," he began. "What I saw at the coffee club last night shows me the good that can be done with even a few dollars, and I hate to think that my rooms at the hotel are being charged up against me day after day, and I not using them."

Donald smiled. "I am glad to hear you talk like that," he said.

"Well," continued Jimmy, "I know I've got to straighten myself up a bit yet before I start for home, and, if I'm not an awful bore to you and a trouble to Mrs. Brodie, I'd like to stay on here for perhaps another week."

"You're welcome as the flowers in spring," Donald replied, with a cordial grip on the young fellow's shoulder. "Jimmy, I will speak plain. I don't want you to slip back to your old ways. I really think you'll be safer here than anywhere, for a little time, at all events."

"Donald, I'm done with drink—done with it for good and all. I know I'm not to be trusted with liquor, and I'm on the water-wagon right from now."

"I believe you, sonnie, and that's just the resolution you've got to stick to through thick and thin."

"I always knew I was a fool, Donald, but I never had the strength of mind to quit till I met you. I have been a miserable weakling for years. Not that I've been drinking all the time—don't think so bad of me as that. But every now and then I would go on a bat, as you found me on Saturday, and once I had started there was an end to all scruples, good resolutions, and everything else of the kind. As I said, I seemed to be devoid of all strength of will."

"Oh, you've lots of will-power, man, lots of courage. Jimmy, last Monday night you were the bravest man I've ever known."

"How's that?"

"When you wouldn't allow me to fetch those oranges, but insisted on putting on some clothes and going yourself. You were so determined to have your own way that I decided to put you to the test."

Jimmy smiled wanly. "When I was mean enough to ask for the loan of a dollar to buy oranges," he said, in a low voice, "I had a vague idea that I might get a drink on the quiet without your knowing anything about it."

"Yes," was the triumphant reply, "and you came back without entering a saloon."

"But I had to fight myself all the time."

"Didn't I know it? I waited for your return in an agony of suspense—I followed you in my mind every step of the way. But when I let you go out alone, I had felt that you were strong enough to win. And it was the fight of your life you won that night, my boy. That's why I say you were brave—stronger and braver than you think."

"I could never have looked you in the face again, Donald, if I had spent a nickel of that dollar in a saloon."

"That showed you were fighting the real fight, Jimmy —the fight to preserve your own self-respect. Self-respect—that is the vital thing. You came back bright and happy, just because you had no reason to feel ashamed of yourself. It is not what the other man thinks of you that counts. It's what you think of yourself. In the battle of life, the man who preserves his own self-respect is winning all the time. As regards wealth, or what the world calls success, he may be the under-dog, but it is better to be the under-dog, feeling that you did your best to put up a fight for the right, than the dog above who knows he did the wrong. Success at the cost of self-respect can bring no real happiness. Life's so-called failures may be the biggest heroes of us all."

"The failure the real success," mused Sheldon, weighing the paradox.

"Provided his self-respect is intact," admonished Donald. "That is the only thing to fight for every time, whether we are reaching out for a prize or striking back at a temptation. And every victory along those lines strengthens a man's character, and makes him fitter for the next test that comes along. So when you returned Monday night, Jimmy, with your sack of oranges and your happy smile, I knew you had won your fight, old fellow, and were once again a man."

"Thank God, you trusted me. I see it all now."

"I'm proud of you, boy. But now we are not going to talk another word about mistakes that are past and done with. It is the present we have got to attend to; and if the past only helps us to make the best use of the golden opportunities of the present, then all is well."

"I've been regretting many things to-day," said Jimmy wistfully. "But, by the Lord, I'm going to regret them no more," he went on, with brightening look, as he gripped the other's hand, "for it was just my

own foolishness that brought you to me as a friend. I'll never be able to thank you enough, Donald Brodie."

"No thanks are needed. It's the biggest pleasure in life to be able to lend a helping hand." Then a grave, sad look came into the speaker's face as he continued: "It's all a case of passing on the good turn. God knows that the good turn was done to me. That is how we both must feel, and it will be your chance next to give some poor fellow the lift that may mean all the difference between a wasted life and a happy and useful one."

As he spoke there was a break in his voice, the suspicion of tears in his eyes.

Jimmy wondered, but instinctively shrank from pursuing a subject that could cause such painful emotions. He got back to matter-of-fact things at once.

"Then after supper we'll go to the Planters Hotel and pack my belongings. You'll come with me?"

"Surely," assented Brodie. He had now recovered himself and was glancing around the modest-sized room. "But I fancy those trunks of yours will have to go into cold storage."

"That's exactly what I want," laughed Jimmy. "I wish to get rid of the very sight of many things. I'm going to start out on new lines. Wait till you see old man."

Donald nodded encouragingly, and together they descended to Mrs. Brodie and their waiting supper.

It was close upon nine o'clock when they reached the Planters Hotel. At sight of young Sheldon the bellboy at the end of the bench eagerly slid across the floor of the hall. But the guest had not even a hand-bag to serve as an excuse for obsequious attention. He walked up to the clerk, and asked for the key of his room. He got it, together with an envelope that had been lying beside the key in the numbered pigeonhole. This he

thrust carelessly into his pocket, unopened, and accompanied by Donald took the elevator for upstairs.

Jimmy glanced around the apartment with an air of determination.

"If you'll make yourself comfortable in an easy-chair, old fellow," he said, "I won't be long in stowing this stuff away."

He flung open the lid of a commodious Saratoga trunk, and the first thing he swept into its yawning cavity was the richly flowered Japanese dressing gown hanging across the foot-rail of the bed. He cast a side-glance at Donald, in evident uneasiness of being caught in the possession of such sybaritic apparel. But his friend was reading an evening newspaper he had bought on their way to the hotel, and Jimmy proceeded silently with his task. He emptied closet and bureau, working swiftly, yet showing habitual neatness, for he folded each garment with care before consigning it to the oblivion of the Saratoga. The latter had now been filled, and a large leather kit-bag was receiving the odds and ends of his wardrobe. Judicious selection was at the same time being made, for a number of articles were being bestowed in a grip laid open on a table.

At last Jimmy paused. "I'm taking a few things, of course," he remarked, distracting Brodie's attention from his newspaper. "But how about this? Don't you think I should keep out my sister's photograph?"

"Assuredly," said Donald, looking up. Sheldon had a folding case of morocco leather in his hand

"There are two pictures," he continued, with some hesitation in his voice. "My sister's, and that of—her chum—a very old family friend. Have a look."

And into his companion's hands he passed the red leather holder.

Donald could not restrain a murmur of admiration. He had never before seen two more beautiful faces, each full of character as well as fair to look upon.

"The dark one is my sister Leslie," explained Jimmy quietly. "The girl in white is her friend—Norah Carew."

"Norah!"—it was the name Jimmy had called out again and again in his restless dreaming. But Donald gave no sign.

"The photographs are certainly very fine," was his only comment. "They will give a touch of home to your room. Shall I put it here?" he added, as, rising to his feet, he folded the case and laid it in the grip. "This is the valise you're taking, eh?"

"Right you are."

"And, Jimmy," continued Donald, laying a hand on the young fellow's arm, "I know that you have had a quarrel with your father. But all that is going to end. Have you no picture, too, of the old man?"

"Yes, I have." And, somewhat reluctantly, he produced a companion morocco case from the bureau drawer whence the other had come. Without comment he handed it to Donald.

The latter scrutinized the handsome countenance of a man of about sixty years, its most noticeable features the white, neatly trimmed Vandyke beard, and the calm, resolute eyes.

"By jove, sonnie," he exclaimed, "you should be proud of such a father."

"And so I am," responded Jimmy, turning aside to hide the emotion on his face. "I've known all along that I was in the wrong. My dad is the bravest and finest old fellow in all the world."

"We'll take this picture also," said Donald, placing the holder above the other in the grip. "Now, are you about through?"

"In a minute or two. I've got to get my check-book, and I guess this is my hotel bill."

While speaking, he drew from his pocket the envelope he had received from the clerk downstairs.

Sheldon seated himself at a writing table, a drawer of which he unlocked. Then he opened the envelope.

"Whew!" After the whistle of surprise came an interval of silence.

At last he rose, looking flushed and crestfallen.

"Great Scott, Donald, I've been spending money in St. Louis hand over fist! I had no idea I had blown in so much. I've never told you, but I lost my watch and pocket-book the night before I met you—I've been too damned ashamed of myself to confess."

"Well, there is nothing so bad but it might be worse, Jimmy," was the quiet reply, given in the kindliest of tones and with the kindliest of smiles. "You're not short, are you, for your bill?"

"No, I can just make it. But I won't have five dollars left to tip the bell-hops."

"The bell-hops have undoubtedly been very liberally tipped already," laughed Donald. "That need not distress you."

"And I see no other way but to draw on my father for railroad transportation—my ticket was in my pocket-book."

He sank into a chair, and covered his face with both hands.

"You have no right to draw on your father," said Donald gravely. "After all that has happened, this is about the last thing to be thought of."

"I know it. I can't do it—no, no, I can't do it. The very thought has unnerved me."

"There's another way out," remarked Brodie thoughtfully, rising and slowly pacing the room. "How far have you to go to get home?"

"To San Francisco," replied Jimmy, sitting up.

"How much is the fare there?"

"Haven't the remotest idea. My ticket was a through one from Paris."

"I don't suppose we've the slightest chance of recov-

ering your stolen pocket-book. But a hundred dollars at the outside will see you home, and I can put you in the way of getting that."

"How?"

"By working. I can find you a job."

"But I never earned a dollar in my life. I'm afraid I don't know how."

"I'll show you how. It will take time, however; it may hold you to St. Louis for a few months instead of a few days. But, Jimmy, my boy, the earning of that money by the sweat of your brow will be the making of you. It will add to your own self-respect, and it will win you back your father's respect as well—I feel sure you have never lost his love."

Sheldon had risen to his feet, his face suffused with honest enthusiasm.

"How can it be done, old man? Who would employ a useless fellow like me?" And in his sense of worthlessness he held out his dainty white hands.

"Leave that to me. You know I am the master-mechanic at a terra-cotta and tile factory. There's a boy there in line for promotion, and I can get you his job at the pug-mill."

"The pug-mill! What the deuce is that?"

"The man at the pug-mill breaks off the chunks of kneaded and moistened clay, and places them on a traveling belt. Could you manage to do that?"

"Don't look very difficult, does it?" he answered, with a rueful little laugh.

"Could you stick it out ten hours a day—fifty-five hours a week, allowing for the short day on Saturday?"

"That sounds rather harder."

"But it will be the finest discipline you ever had. And you'll earn twenty cents an hour—eleven dollars per week."

"Oh, lor'!" exclaimed Jimmy, in dismal dismay. "Then when am I going to get back to San Francisco?"

"When you have saved one hundred dollars, dollar by dollar, out of your pay," responded Brodie, putting both his hands on the other's shoulders, holding him at arm's length and looking resolutely into his eyes; "when you have made yourself once more a man, Jimmy, and can meet your father and your sister again with some pride in your own heart, with the consciousness that you have done at least a little to deserve their forgiveness and esteem."

For a moment the youth wavered. But at last he straightened himself with an air of determination.

"Donald, I'll take that pug-mill job," he cried, grasping his friend's hand. "I'll take it. I want your good opinion, too, as well as theirs. I'm ready to go with you to the factory to-morrow morning."

"Monday will do," replied Brodie. "Between now and then you must write home, and ease your folks' anxious minds by letting them know that you are well and happy—for you've got to be happy in your work, Jimmy, if you're to go through with the task that lies ahead."

CHAPTER VI

IRRECONCILABLE

"Norah, I've got news for you. There's a letter from Jimmy at last!"

"Oh, I'm so thankful! Where is he, Leslie? Safe and well?"

"He is in St. Louis and appears to be all right. His letter is a very long one, and, in some respects, a strange one. That is why I telephoned to you to come round an hour before dinner, so that we could talk over things before the others arrive."

The girls were in what Leslie called her "den," a dainty boudoir upstairs, with pink hangings and upholstery, and the coziest of cozy corners in a big window-recess commanding a view of the harbor. Away below were the twinkling lights of city and shipping. Norah had already settled herself in this accustomed nook. Leslie drew down the shades, and then, taking a good-sized bunch of papers from a bureau, joined her friend.

"What's that?" asked Norah. "The manuscript of a novel?"

"In a sense that's just what it is. Jimmy has a very remarkable story to tell. He spent nearly a whole Sunday in writing to me."

"Making up for lost time, and the many letters he ought to have written long ago," said Norah, with a determined little nod of disapproval. Now that she was

assured as to the safety of the long-lost prodigal, she was getting prepared to pass his conduct in review.

"Well, dear, we won't rake up past grievances; I think after the penitent way in which Jimmy writes, this is the best spirit in which to meet his overtures for reconciliation. We have just got to forgive him for all the anxiety he has caused."

"Oh, I don't know," she replied, with a toss of her head. "That may be all right for you, his sister. But I have to hear where he has been and what he has to say for himself. And why didn't he write to me as well?"

"He sends you an affectionate message, and begs me to plead with you not to think too badly of him."

"Well, we shall see. I'm all attention." And Norah, with downcast eyes, began carefully to adjust the folds of her skirt.

Leslie, paying no attention to the show of petulance, spread out the epistle on her lap.

"He does not say very much about his travels abroad," she commenced. "As we already know, after his high words with father he took a boat for Japan. He spent nearly six months there and in China, also visiting the Philippines and India. On the whole, he seems to have made good use of his time in the Orient. You can read these adventures later on; meanwhile, I want to get to the St. Louis part of the letter."

Leslie turned over two of the big quarto pages, closely filled with tiny, neat writing. "From India and Burmah he returned to China, and after visiting Port Arthur and most of the Manchurian battlefields, took the trans-Siberian railway for St. Petersburg." Another sheet was turned. "I'm not so sure about him there and at Moscow; reading between the lines, I am afraid he had a pretty wild time."

Norah looked up. Her lips were pressed tightly together, her eyes looked quite stern. But she did not interrupt.

"I think we'll pass over Germany, Italy and France," continued Leslie, giving the go-by to a few more pages. "Then he went back to Austria and Hungary, and ultimately got to England, with a final return visit to Paris, and then home to America."

A great gulp came from Norah's throat. "I'll never forgive him," she cried, throwing an arm on the window-sill, and burying her face in her sleeve. "That is just the tour we were to make together—some day." Her heaving shoulders told that she was in tears.

Leslie bent over the sobbing girl.

"But, Norah dear, you must remember that you also sent him away. You gave him up—you told him you didn't care whether he went or stayed."

"What else could I have done at that time?"

"I know, oh, I know! You were perfectly justified. I merely remind you that he only took you at your word in roaming about as he did."

"I never meant it—he should have known I never meant it."

"Well, my dear, don't make yourself miserable about it now. We both know that after his quarrel with father, and—shall we say?—his misunderstanding with you, he went off in a fit of bad temper and the blues. And we also know how very easily he falls under the influence of wild companions, of whom there would be plenty wherever he went."

"That's just the reason why he should have remained here," exclaimed Norah with returning indignation, as she brushed away her tears.

"But it's all over now, sweetheart. It was an awful temptation for a boy like Jimmy to have command over so much money. He admits he flung it away with both hands."

"What do I care about the horrid money?"

"I know you don't, but I am only trying my best to plead Jimmy's cause—to find some little excuse for the

bad break he made. I'll have a hard enough task to soften papa's heart. I thought you were going to help me do that, little girl."

Norah gave a wan, fleeting smile, like the first gleam of sunshine through drifting rain-clouds.

"I suppose I'll have to, Leslie," she said. "I've an idea that Mr. Sheldon won't forgive Jimmy unless I forgive him first."

"Perhaps you'll feel all the more willing to forgive when you read what has happened in St. Louis. There he has come under the influence of a very fine man—one who seems to me to be really a most remarkable man. To begin with—Jimmy is on the water-wagon."

"And high time, too. I used to tell him it was his only chance to do justice to himself. Then who is this man?"

There was just a touch of antagonism in the tone of her query—the faint suggestion of resentment that another should have succeeded where she herself had failed.

"His name is Donald Brodie. He is a mechanic in a terra-cotta factory."

"A mechanic! Well, for the land's sake!" There was now a real look of injured pride on the pretty face—real and disdainful bitterness in the voice.

"A master-mechanic, I should have said," corrected Leslie. "Foreman in charge of the machinery, I take it, and therefore a man superior enough to be singled out among his fellows. And quite young yet—Jimmy thinks not more than twenty-seven or twenty-eight."

"Even if he is a foreman, he is nothing but a common working man all the same."

"Yes, but don't let us forget that it is he who has put Jimmy straight at last. Rich and spendthrift companions were the chief cause of his foolishness. For myself, I cannot but feel my heart go out in gratitude toward this—common working man."

She repeated the other's words, slowly and with a subtle emphasis.

"No doubt I have been unjust," said Norah with some little contriteness. "But let me hear something more about this Mr. Brodie. What makes you think him so very remarkable?"

"Jimmy's own letter," replied Leslie, touching the pages on her lap. "He writes more about Donald Brodie than about all his travels abroad. He declares him to be the most splendid fellow he ever met, and wants me to understand why he has formed this high opinion. Jimmy does not spare himself in telling me how he came under Brodie's care. I feel inclined, though, to spare both him and myself to you, Norah dear," she continued sadly, covering her eyes as if to shut out some painful picture. "It was just another occasion of tipsy irresponsibility, when this strong man intervened, and reached forth a saving hand."

She paused for a moment; her companion remained in silent listening.

"But that is all over now, I think," Leslie resumed, brightly and cheerfully. "Mr. Brodie took him to his home, where his mother, a kindly old soul, nursed him back to health and self-respect. That's where Jimmy is at the present time."

Her eyes met Norah's.

"Well, then, we've got to get him back to San Francisco at once," remarked the latter. "Who else are in the family?"

"Oh, she is a widow, and this is her only son—her only child," she added, for in Norah's glance there was still unsatisfied questioning.

"If Jimmy needs nursing it should be here—in his own home," was the decisive rejoinder.

"Wait a moment, Norah. That is precisely the question I wanted to talk over with you. Of course I should like to have Jimmy home again. But he is determined

to remain where he is for a time, and I don't know but that this may be the very wisest course."

"But surely he has been long enough away already."

"Norah, listen, dear. Jimmy did not have all the chances of good home influences that most boys enjoy. When my dear mama died"—she glanced at a framed picture hanging on the wall—"I was only a little girl of ten. But her last words to me were to be a mother to 'her Jimmy boy'—that's what she called him."

It was Leslie now who was weeping, and Norah who had the rôle of comforter.

"There now, honey, and haven't you been a good mother to Jimmy all the time?"

"I tried to be, but I am afraid I had no real mother influence over him. He grew up a little wilful, and you know how, after he went through college, the wilfulness had changed to wildness, and how terribly stern our father became. He was too engrossed in the plant, too impatient of everything outside business affairs, to give Jimmy much attention—I don't think he ever understood the boy. And then dear old daddy holds so strictly to his own sense of duty that Jimmy's escapades, and his refusal to settle down to hard work right away—oh, you know it all, Norah. Why should I speak like this?" And she hid her tear-stained face in her hands.

"Yes, Leslie dear, I know it all. And that is why I have always tried to excuse Jimmy. But there, he is going to give us no more anxiety now."

"I hope so," replied Leslie, regaining her habitual self-control. "I sincerely hope so, and somehow I believe absolutely in Jimmy's promises this time. But these promises have come, I can see, because of the strong will of another man, aided by the goodness and care of that man's mother. It is these Brodies, mother and son, who seem to have changed Jimmy's whole nature, bringing him to a sense of responsibility to himself and to others such as he has never had before. Now,

don't you see what's in my mind? Would it not be well to leave him in his present susceptible mood under these good influences as long as possible—to encourage him to remain in St. Louis rather than to use pressure to bring him home?"

"I begin to understand."

"Wait, I want you to read some of the things Jimmy tells me about this new friend, Donald Brodie. It will help you to appreciate the man's character, and to make your faith in him as strong as the almost impulsive faith I already feel." Leslie was turning over the pages of the letter. "See here," she said, selecting a couple of sheets. "Just read this description of what Jimmy calls—'A Night at Brodie's Coffee Club.'"

With gathered brows and earnest look, Norah settled herself to read the pages placed in her hand, while Leslie searched through the rest of the voluminous epistle for the next passage to submit.

"Isn't that fine?" exclaimed Norah, glancing up when she had come to the end of the coffee club episode. "He is certainly a splendid man. And doesn't Jimmy tell the story in great shape?"

"I never knew him to write like that before. It just shows how his whole heart has been stirred—his whole being changed. Now let me explain," continued Leslie, another selected page in her hand. "It appears that this man Brodie spends at least one hour every night in solid reading—not trash, but some really valuable book. Jimmy says that no matter how hard he may have toiled all day, how late he may have been kept by other things, such as this work among the newspaper boys, no matter how early he may have to be up in the morning, Brodie makes this rule of an hour's reading an inflexible one. In fact, he holds that the only chance to increase one's knowledge day by day is to adopt such a rule and stay by it. Now, to show you the thoroughness of the man, the very first night Jimmy came to

know about this, he had found Brodie poring over a history of India. And why? Simply to get at the truth of the newspaper stories of lamentable conditions in India today. But there, read for yourself; Jimmy writes the whole story, and really it strikes me as a veritable flashlight into a man's character, almost into his very soul."

Again the one girl read in silence a closely lettered page, while the other turned over the remaining sheets of correspondence.

"It is all very wonderful," murmured Norah. "I have never before heard of a working man like that."

"Doubtless there are plenty others in the working world. But you and I, Norah, don't know such men simply because our lives have never been brought into real contact with theirs. That's pretty nearly as Jimmy himself feels. He says he is learning new things now, new thoughts, new ideas, every hour of the waking day. But here is just another passage, a short one. It will specially appeal to you with your love of music. Let me read it aloud."

Leslie proceeded to quote a paragraph from Jimmy's letter:

"Last night we all went to the opera—Donald, his mother and myself. Don't think for a moment that this man is a sort of preaching fellow, driving home moral lessons all the time. He loves the theatre, and has a splendid knowledge of the drama—its history as well as present-day productions and actors. But grand opera is his passion, and he never loses any opportunity that offers to attend a good performance. Saturday is his only free night, for through some old Scottish prejudice of his mother's he won't go to a theatre on Sunday. Last night it was Tannhauser. Well, on the Friday night, before we turned in, Brodie told me the whole story of the play, explaining its inner meaning as I had never understood it

before; and he gave me also many new ideas about the music, showing how Wagner's methods had grown and grown through previous works until at last they had developed into this mighty masterpiece.

"In the course of our conversation, Brodie found out how little I knew about the orchestra—its different instruments and the part each group takes in the aggregate massive effects produced. What must he do but take me next afternoon to the public library? And there he set me down in front of a book which clearly and succinctly explained the first principles of orchestration. Of course I could not learn the whole thing in a couple of hours. But I tell you, sis, that night at the opera I heard the music as I had never heard it before. You know how I have always loved music in a general sort of way—how I have never tired of hearing our dear little Norah, the very soul of music as I have always thought, play and sing."

"My, but that's a bouquet!" smiled the listener. Leslie went on reading:

"But up to now a band playing was just a band playing. This last Saturday night it was altogether different—the orchestral music was not merely one massive effect, it was a harmonious blending of a dozen different effects, each of which I could now detect with some comprehension of how it contributed to the superb total result.

"A little incident in itself, Leslie, but I tell it to you just to help you understand Brodie's thorough methods, and to show you how a fellow can be gaining all the time from his companionship."

"A sort of Admirable Crichton," commented Norah. "But what Jimmy says is true; he got a good lesson in music all right."

Leslie, turning over another page, continued:

"And this strikes me as a remarkable thought. Jimmy was allowed to copy it from one of Mr. Brodie's note-books. Listen:

"America is the land of promise, the land of hope, where the shackles of serfdom shall be broken forever, where there shall be no overlord and no humbled servitor, where there shall be no pleading for employment or doling out of wages, where capital and labor shall be as one—co-partners for the advancement of mankind, united by true comradeship and not by any obsolete 'master and servant' agreement, unselfish fellow-workers for the common good and general welfare, turning capital to its most beneficent purposes, directing hand-work and brain-work to their most useful ends, replacing competition by coöperation, seeking not to accumulate individual riches but to diffuse universal comfort, happiness, and contentment, setting the rights of man over the rights of property, counting honesty above wealth, justice above power, conscience above expediency, humanity above personal ambition, with brotherly love the animating motive and guiding spirit among us all. This is the ideal America for which we should strive."

"What do you think of that?" asked Leslie, raising her eyes from the manuscript.

"It is certainly great," commented Norah. "You say Jimmy copied that passage? Well, I should also like to make a copy for myself, so that I could read it over a few times. Yes, I begin to think with you, Leslie, that Jimmy has found a companion, or at least an acquaintance, who is worth while."

Leslie smiled. "Both you and I, Norah dear, have some little shackles of class prejudice to get rid of before we can attain to that plane of thinking," she said quietly, as she folded the letter. "But there's a greater surprise than ever in store for you."

"Oh, you can't surprise me any more. Out with it."

"Jimmy, when he wrote, was going to start working next morning."

"Where?"

"At the terra-cotta plant where Mr. Brodie is foreman."

"What does Jimmy know about terra-cotta? What use will he be in the management of such a business?"

"He will have nothing to do with the management. He begins as a common laborer—at the pug-mill."

"A common laborer! And what in the name of mercy is a pug-mill?"

"It moistens and kneads the clay, which the man in charge cuts into lumps—so he explains."

"Jimmy Sheldon do work like that—our Jimmy—smearing his hands and his clothes with the dirty stuff. Impossible!"

"He was to start in next morning at seven o'clock. And he was just going to give me some correct notions about the dignity of labor *à la* Donald Brodie, when the said Donald Brodie intervened that Sunday afternoon, made him close his letter, and carried him off to a baseball game."

"Then he's happy at the prospect?"

"Quite happy," he says. "Never felt so happy before."

Norah gave a shrug of her shoulders.

"The idea!" she said disdainfully. "And how long is this delightful mud-pie job to last?"

"Until he saves a hundred dollars to bring him home."

"How ridiculous, Leslie! I'll send him the hundred dollars. Or *you'll* send it to him—that would be better, and I'll contribute. But of course this must be strictly between ourselves, or he would be offended."

"You don't quite comprehend, dear," said Leslie patiently. "Jimmy does not say so, but I can gather what he means. He is going to save that money by way

of self-discipline. His pay will be only eleven dollars a week, but——"

"Less than fifty dollars a month!" interrupted Norah. "If Jimmy is going to save a hundred dollars out of that princely salary, he won't be back to San Francisco before Halley's comet returns."

"Well, I confess that the task seems to me an impossible one. But we can at least await the development of events and see what happens."

"Nonsense, Leslie. The poor boy is dead broke, and is too proud to write to his father for money. We'll telegraph that hundred dollars tomorrow, or better still two hundred, and he'll be home within four or five days, make no mistake."

"I don't think so," was Leslie's composed reply, as she re-arranged and folded the bulky letter. "Nor, as I said before, do I think it would be the wisest plan. But I'll hear tonight what father has to say. Now I guess you had better fix your hair; it's all mussed up. In another minute the gong will be ringing."

Downstairs Mr. Sheldon, Mr. Wilmington, and Norah's aunt, Miss Octavia Carew, a plump and pleasant-faced old lady on the shady side of sixty, were awaiting the young hostess. With the sounding of the gong the informal little party of five was assembled.

During the progress of dinner Leslie more than once attentively regarded her father. He seemed to be more thoughtful and reserved than usual. Had he, too, received a letter from Jimmy?

When coffee had been served in the music-room, Leslie adroitly got Miss Carew and the banker started at a game of poker patience. She had previously sent Norah to the piano, whence the softly-played harmony of Wolfram's song from Tannhauser, "Sweet Evening Star" was floating through the room.

Leslie had her father now cornered and alone. Her

bow was strung, and she shot her arrow straight at the mark.

"I have had a letter from Jimmy," she said.

"So have I," he replied, with a snap of his determined jaws.

"Don't you think we should bring him home, papa dear?" she quietly pleaded.

"Not on your life. A pug-mill job at twenty cents an hour is just about his size."

He smiled grimly, he had spoken gruffly, and Leslie searched anxiously but in vain for some kindliness in his eyes. She laid a hand on his.

"So you consider it will be best for him to remain in St. Louis?" she asked timidly and giving the gentlest possible interpretation to his words.

"I don't care two bits what he does. I have got to learn yet that he is capable of holding down any job."

"Oh, daddy, you will surely answer his letter?"

"There need be no hurry about that. It took him nearly two years to write to me."

"But he is sorry now—he asks to be forgiven."

"Yes, in the usual way, professing to be on the water-wagon and dropping a mild hint that a hundred dollars would come in handy to bring him home."

"But he is going to save it himself, father—pay his own way to San Francisco."

"Oh, I've been up against begging letters of that kind before."

"Father, father!" protested Leslie.

"Not from him, of course, but from others. The man who is always *going to do* something is an adventurer or a sham—the words are the glib stock-in-trade of the whole contemptible crew."

"But if he earns and saves that hundred dollars, papa——"

"The age of miracles will have returned," he interjected.

"If he comes home, a year hence, let it be—on the water-wagon——"

"My dear Leslie, don't be a simple little fool. The water-wagon may sound all very well for a few days. He's probably back on the distiller's dray by now."

"No, no. He is being helped to keep his good resolutions. He is under the influence of a strong, kind friend."

"Then let him stick to his strong, kind friend—yes, one of those slick and plausible fellows, no doubt, as Wilmington suggests, who, knowing that his protégé is a rich man's son, has his own ulterior objects to serve."

Mr. Sheldon had risen to his feet, and Leslie followed his example.

Wilmington, watching them out of the corner of his eyes, and straining his ears, must have caught the concluding words, or at least divined the tenor of the conversation from the father's stern face and the daughter's look of distress.

"Oh, I cannot believe that," murmured Leslie, clasping her hands to suppress her feelings.

But Mr. Sheldon, taking a cigar from the box beside the coffee-tray, strode from the room.

"A busted royal flush, Miss Carew," said Wilmington with a bland and contented smile, as his opponent turned and ruefully surveyed her last card. "Desperate chances do not often succeed. Isn't that so, Leslie?"

But Leslie, passing the card-table, made no reply. She vaguely understood that in the more or less enigmatic remark a cruel thrust was intended for Jimmy, who had always been at loggerheads with the banker in the old days.

She was whispering in Norah's ear, while the Tannhauser music uninterruptedly rippled on. It was the Pilgrims' Chorus that was now being played.

"Father is relentless, I'm afraid. And we'll have to fight Mr. Wilmington's prejudices as well."

"Why should he be always butting in?" asked Norah, in a low tone, as she darted a swift glance of angry contempt in the direction of the card-players. And the plaintive song of the passing pilgrims suddenly changed into the confused whirling clamor of the seductive sirens.

Wilmington, while he shuffled the cards, was covertly watching the girls at the piano.

He caught Norah's resentful glance, he dimly understood the threat of war conveyed by the tumultuous music. But his smile was suave and complacent as ever when he laid down the deck before Miss Carew. It was his turn for the count.

"Cut, please," he said.

"I hope you'll get a bob-tail flush just like mine," remarked the old lady sweetly while she divided the pack.

"We'll win out for Jimmy, Leslie dear," murmured the young musician, as the siren spells grew fainter and fainter, and the chant of the pilgrims wending their onward way swelled forth again, subdued by distance but more than ever ringing with joyful triumph.

CHAPTER VII

BY THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW

Young Sheldon was duly installed at the pug-mill in the big terra-cotta plant. His predecessor in office moved up to another department, where he became a presser—the man who puts the clay into the molds. Jimmy had missed just one rung of the ladder, the lowermost of all; he had not begun as a wheeler, loading the dry clay into a barrow, feeding it to the grinding pan, and thence transferring the powdered material to the mixer where it takes up the proper proportion of water.

It was at this stage of the manufacturing process that Jimmy's job came in. The pug-mill squeezed out the mixed and moistened clay in a cylindrical roll about a foot in diameter, and at the outlet stood Jimmy, operating a pivoted wire that was brought down like a fine knife blade at intervals of twenty or thirty seconds and divided the protruding roll into convenient lengths. The severed lumps dropped on to a conveyor belt, by which they descended into cool cellars, where the clay had to be ripened or seasoned under a covering of dampened burlap until, after several months, it passed to the molding department.

On the Monday morning when he started in Jimmy had been brought to the plant by Donald half an hour before work began, and had been conducted over several departments so that he might have an intelligent idea of what his duties really meant. After a time

he would have opportunities to watch the men engaged in the most skilled operations of all—the mold-makers constructing the molds in plaster and working from the architect's blueprints, the oven men trained to a knowledge of temperatures and the circulation of superheated air, and the modelers, true artists these, fashioning the floral scrolls and figure designs that would ultimately, in some city perhaps a thousand miles away, decorate the great building the outer facing of which was here being made, every single piece that was modeled, molded and fired having its numbered place in the construction plan.

The manufacture of tiles in every variety of coloring and design was carried on in a separate section of the works, and later on, as Donald promised, Jimmy would be initiated into these processes as well.

Meanwhile his post of duty was at the pug-mill, and there on the Saturday morning toward the close of his first week of work he stood, quietly intent upon his job. The physical fatigue of the earlier days had passed—Jimmy no longer felt the small of his back like to break at the end of the ten-hour working day during which he had to stand erect and virtually in one position. The mental strain, too, of continuous although purely mechanical attention had worn itself off; he had no longer to force himself by stern control to stick to his task of deadly dull routine. On the first afternoon he had almost shrieked aloud at times. All that feeling was now gone, and this Saturday morning he was working away, contentedly slicing the never-ending cylinder of moving clay, which had become to him a sort of living creature, a giant anaconda to be severed at each vertebral section in the interest of human progress and happiness.

For during this commencing week at the pug-mill Jimmy had already become something of a philosopher. He had ample time day after day to ruminate on the things which Donald Brodie's evening conversations

were teaching him. Here was he now, one who had hitherto lived the typical life of America's young and idle rich, clad in overalls that covered a cheap suit of store clothes, his hands stained with damp brown clay, his very face and hair smeared with the sticky material. Yet there was content in his heart such as he had never known before. For thanks to Donald Brodie he had come to understand what the dignity of labor really means. Frequently during the week, while his eyes were watching the extruding clay and his hands at each proper moment were bringing down the guillotining wire, had he pieced together in mind various fragments of Donald's philosophy.

"It is not what any one man does that has to be considered. Every product of human labor is the combined work of dozens of keen brains and hundreds of pairs of busy hands. No one man is the whole works; every individual has his allotted place in the general scheme, and it is absolutely essential, if the desired result is to be attained, that each should perform his part conscientiously and efficiently. Stop the pug-mill, Jimmy, and the whole terra-cotta factory comes to a stop; the skyscraper in Chicago or Kansas City comes to a stop; the interior decorators can't start in on their share of the work; contractors and architect tear their own hair, and are out for scalps. So you see that the man at the pug-mill controls the whole job."

Jimmy had laughed when this novel presentation of the workings of the modern industrial world had been first made to him. He laughed again now at the thought of the man at the pug-mill controlling the job. Yet he had come to realize that his work was quite essential to the running of the plant, and he sliced away in dignified consciousness of the fact.

"No one man is the whole works, Jimmy"—the words repeated themselves in his mind, for they were a favorite saying of Donald's. "The mainspring is all-essential

to the watch; but so is the tiniest screw that holds the wheels together. The brain power in the president's room is the prime mover toward success; but it can be brought to utter failure if the office-boy plays marbles on his way to the telegraph station. Every man and boy must work together to produce the desired results. And the man at the top shouldn't imagine that he is running the whole show, nor the kid at the bottom think himself of no account. When the office-boy is taught to understand that his share in the work is just as essential as that of the boss, the very sense of responsibility increases his efficiency by fifty per cent. He becomes proud of himself and of the whole establishment; the spirit of the true dignity of labor is breathed into his very soul; he holds his head aloft, and keeps his brain and hands nimble for his share of the common task. Think of that, Jimmy, when you are at the pug-mill. Don't think of the clay under the knife. Think of the big Federal building going up in Minneapolis or somewhere else, and remember that you are helping to build it—that they can't build it without you, and that your daily ten hours of toil are an essential contribution to the great and beautiful structure in which important service for the whole nation will be carried on for perhaps a hundred years to come."

The man at the pug-mill sliced on with meditative care; the vista of his thoughts had opened out far beyond the dark and narrow corridor in which he was working. The lumps of clay might have been bars of gold for the scrupulous care they received at his hands. His train of reminiscences continued:

"These are the arguments, my boy, that give dignity to labor however humble the job may seem. They can bring even a restless and ambitious fellow to do the immediate task lying to his hand with conscientious care and contented mind. And therein lies the whole secret of a man's success—to perform the present duty, what-

ever it is, not only to the utmost of his power, but cheerfully as well. It may be only cutting lumps of clay, Jimmy; but cut them carefully and with a happy smile. In that frame of mind you may rest assured that the higher and more interesting work will speedily come along. Every bit of human mechanism is going to find its proper and most effective place in the great industrial plant of the civilized world."

The whistle blew, the pug-mill gave an expiring rumble, the clay ceased to discharge itself, the traveling belt came to a standstill. It was noon, the short five-hour day was over, the week's fifty-five hours of toil were completed. Jimmy, overalls discarded, and hung upon the wall, was rinsing his hands and face at a faucet when Donald came along.

"Hurry up, son," cried the latter cheerily, "I'm as hungry as a hunter. By the way, there will be only five days' pay in your envelope. Today counts for next week. The run of the factory is from Saturday morning to Friday night, when they make up each man's time."

After punching the time-clock they filed past the pay-office and received their envelopes. Jimmy contemplated his little roll of currency—five bills, one of $5, one of $2, and three of $1 each. Ten dollars in all, the first money he had ever earned! He had spent as much many a time on a bouquet of flowers or a couple of bottles of wine.

But this money in his hand counted bigger to him than ever ten dollars had counted before, for it represented five days of hard, steady work. Just so much could he secure in return for this amount of toil. He knew what the long hours meant, the early rising whatever the mood of the moment when the alarm bell rang, the fatigue of standing on his feet all day long, the monotonous tedium of doing the same thing over and

over again for a whole day and then for a week of days. The equivalent of all this self-denial and self-control and self-effacement—for his very identity seemed to have been swallowed up in the general body of his fellow-toilers—was but eleven dollars per week, and his respect for the sum was a feeling quite new to him.

Almost unconsciously young Sheldon had already become one of the working classes, his view point was now that of the working classes, and his week's hard-earned pay represented all that life had for him, both in supplying his necessities and in ministering to his enjoyments. And such a poor little sum when reckoned in terms of American Beauty Roses or choice vintage champagne! Henceforth his very standards would have to be changed, for before starting work had he not paid out his last $5 on the suit of marked-down store-clothes for wear at the factory under an arrangement to pay $1 per week for seven weeks succeeding? A sack suit for $12 for one of the gilded youth who had never before in his life worn anything but tailor-mades of imported tweed cut in the latest fashion! In present circumstances the new standard for clothing was an agreeable surprise—he had never known that decent-looking garments could be bought for so little money. Even Mrs. Brodie had complimented him on the fine fit of the ready-made coat and trousers, and Donald had laughingly remarked that, as his dapper figure was evidently a regular model in the factories, he need never again as long as he lived take the trouble to be measured at the tailor's.

So for Jimmy the earning of money by the labor of his hands meant a complete change of mental attitude. Brought into a new magnetic field, he found the polarity of his fixed ideas altered. At one and the same time he learned both the folly of extravagance and the power of thrift. When money came without effort, it might be squandered without serious self-reproach; but the man

who would fling away in an hour the product of fifty-five hours of hard toil could only judge himself to himself as a consummate fool. It was with vague thoughts of this kind that Sheldon, as he rode home on the street-car, fingered the precious greenbacks in his waistcoat pocket.

At the row of stores before they turned into the tree-shaded residential avenue, Brodie halted.

"Jimmy, I want you to change that paper money of yours for silver dollars. Later on you'll get at my reason. Here; I've no doubt the butcher will oblige."

"Give me silver dollars all the time," laughed the young fellow, jingling the goodly bunch of big coins. "That's what we are accustomed to in dear old California."

"I know. But you'll want some of these dollars for a special purpose. Come into my room for a minute. I've got a little present for you."

Donald with great gravity produced from a drawer in his bureau a metal savings bank constructed in cash-register style.

"This is for you," he said, handing it over. "The first dollar that goes in locks the box, and it can't be opened again until the hundreth dollar passes through the slot. I saw it in a hardware store and thought it would be the very thing. When the bell rings up one hundred dollars, it will be your signal to take the train home for San Francisco."

Jimmy smiled as he examined the little box.

"Oh, off and on, I've had many savings banks when a kid," he said. "But I could always open them or get the coins out with a knife-blade, when emergencies arose."

"You won't do it with this one," commented Donald grimly. "I have satisfied myself on that point. You'll have to go the whole hundred-dollar course once you [illegible]ell."

Sheldon straddled a chair, placing the bank before him on the table.

"Well, here we are, old man. That money's going to be saved in record time."

And with the merry laugh of a child he popped in the first silver dollar.

Ping! $1 showed on the register.

"Bully!" cried Donald.

Ping! ping! ping! Donald each time applauded.

But when the dollars were still continuing to disappear, the bell to ring, Jimmy to laugh at every addition shown on the register, Brodie fell silent. The look on his face was half-amused, half-grave.

"Eight dollars," gleefully shouted Jimmy, the ninth all ready for the devouring machine.

"Wait a bit," said Donald, laying an arresting hand on his shoulder. "What about that installment due today to Ernstein?"

"Oh, lor'; my new suit! I clean forgot!"

The youth's crestfallen look brought a broad smile to his companion's face.

"And, great guns!" continued Jimmy. "We're going to the ball game in the afternoon, and it's up to me to shell out this time."

"Don't let that worry you. But you'd better keep the one dollar for Ernstein, and the other for carfares next week."

Real distress crept into young Sheldon's face.

"Donald, I'm plumb crazy. Here am I acting like a kid with a new toy. It should have been two dollars only into the savings bank, and the other eight toward board and lodging, the money I've borrowed, my store-clothes, carfare and a dozen other things besides. I just never gave the situation a thought."

"Jimmy, dear old fellow, it is right that you should recognize your responsibilities. Without that, the lesson you are learning would be no lesson at all. Besides, it

would be bad for you to think that saving money is so easy as all that—it would be too much like shelling peas. And then I should be losing your company in a few weeks instead of having you for a good long spell as my comrade and my chum."

"I'm ashamed of myself. Of course I intended to put things on a proper basis."

"Oh, so far as I am concerned, that is the least important thing to consider. But from your standpoint, naturally it's different. I only want you to cure yourself of thoughtlessness, old fellow. Nor is saving money the end-all, remember. A dollar well and profitably spent is better than a dollar saved, for we should save only that the best possible results may be obtained from the eventual spending. We'll spend many a dollar together, Jimmy, even though that bell don't tinkle quite so often as it otherwise might."

"But I must have a business understanding about my room and board."

"Not with me, sonnie. Talk it over with the mother. But you can appeal to me if you find her too hard a hand in driving a bargain," he laughingly added.

Jimmy gave a rueful glance at the locked and unopenable bank.

"Mrs. Brodie will have to trust me until next payday, Donald."

"Well, you needn't fret yourself over that."

"And till I put things straight I don't think there will be any more hand-bell ringing performances on this cash register—not for a good few weeks to come."

"Oh, well, you gave us quite a lively concert this afternoon," chuckled Donald. "Now take your blessed bank to your own room, and change your clothes quickly if we're to get our dinner and be in time for the game. I wouldn't miss the swatting of Chicago by St. Louis—not for all the world."

CHAPTER VIII

THE JUBILEE SINGERS

It was now early December, and young Sheldon had dropped into a regular routine that enabled him to make the fullest and best use of his time. Donald and he had to be up by half-past five and ready for the six o'clock breakfast which Mrs. Brodie, brave and hardy old dame, insisted on preparing with her own hands. When the meal was over their lunch boxes were ready, and they started off in the semi-darkness and the now bitterly cold morning air for the half-hour's car ride to the plant.

Jimmy was no longer at the pug-mill. He was in the molding department, earning the wages of a presser, but acting as an assistant to a skilled finisher, and thereby putting himself in line for the more responsible and better paid job. Donald, when not busy in the repair shop, would be going his rounds of the machinery, and during the working day there was an occasional meeting with Jimmy and the exchange of a friendly word. At noon they lunched together, near the pleasant warmth of the ovens, where as often as not a bunch of the other workers, perhaps a dozen or more, were their companions, and conversation on the chit-chat of the day would develop into discussion on political questions and labor problems. Jimmy delighted in this; as he himself declared, he was gaining new view points all the

time. And there were coming to his mind the first faint, almost subconscious whisperings that there might be something wrong in the relentless and uncompromising—perhaps fanatical—campaign against trades-unionism which his father had been waging ever since Jimmy could remember.

He knew the absolute sincerity of his father, he admired his superb courage and invincible determination, and up to the present he had always accepted as indisputably just, right and final his decisions on the controversies wherein he was involved. But now, with a wider range of vision, with new angles of observation, Jimmy was beginning vaguely to doubt the dictatorial tenets on which heretofore his intelligence had been exclusively nurtured. There are two sides to every argument, and for the first time he was glimpsing at least the edge of the other side.

His father had not replied to the letter that had frankly avowed past follies and asked for parental forgiveness, while a second letter expressing hopes that the appeal would not go unanswered had merely elicited a curt rejoinder that correspondence for the present was out of the question. Jimmy's pride was hurt, and it was only Donald who had kept him in a reasonably contrite frame of mind by showing that the healing of wounds, mental as well as physical, requires patience and time. But perhaps, almost unknown to himself, it was his father's very obduracy that was opening his eyes to the injustice and futility of domineering methods as applied to the relations between employer and employed.

There came from home, however, frequent and affectionate letters from his sister Leslie, which did much to encourage him to tread manfully and cheerfully the hard path of duty on which he had entered. Jimmy's evenings were carefully apportioned, but twice each week he wrote to Leslie, giving her his confidences and his experiences. These were on Tuesday and Friday nights,

which Donald and he always spent at home and in the companionship of Mrs. Brodie. After supper there would be a game of chess, into the intricacies and fascinations of which Jimmy had been initiated, followed by a song or two from Donald, his mother accompanying her son at the piano, for she had determinedly kept up her music so that this old-time family custom might be preserved. Then they would retire to their respective rooms, Donald to study and Jimmy to write. The latter was keeping a diary, and under the heading "The Philosophy of Donald Brodie," he made a faithful record of the conversations in which the young mechanic not only conveyed so many truths that were new to Jimmy, but also revealed the workings of his own mind. And when it came to the bi-weekly letters to Leslie, numerous passages from this diary were transcribed.

Jimmy now relieved Donald one night each week at the coffee club. He had become a prime favorite with the boys, and on Wednesdays presided at their supper table. Indirectly the club had already secured one great boon from its new friend. Leslie, after her father's declaration of relentlessness, had yielded to Norah's importunities and sent her brother $250—"to bring him comfortably home just so soon as he thought it wise to come." But Jimmy had returned the bank draft, with his grateful thanks, but also the reiterated expression of his determination to earn the traveling money required by the labor of his hands. Then back to St. Louis had come the slip of paper, and now Norah's name was jointly associated with the remittance. Since Jimmy would not use the money, the girls wished a phonograph to be purchased for the newsboys' coffee club, in which, they said, they had come to be quite interested. So now there was an assured and varied program for each evening's entertainment, and the lads were becoming familiar with the records of the finest orchestral music and singers of all lands.

Donald took Monday and Thursday evenings at the club, while Jimmy on these nights attended a technical college, at which he had entered for a course of mathematics and mechanics. Saturday night was usually devoted to a theatre, and Sunday evening to the sermon of the best preacher, visiting or resident, St. Louis could provide. Both to theatre and to church Mrs. Brodie, as she gaily put it, chaperoned the young men. On Sunday there was late supper, and usually a discussion on the play of the preceding evening or the discourse to which they had just been listening.

On a certain Sunday evening an incident happened, notable enough in itself, but made still more memorable to Jimmy by reason of the resulting conversation around the supper table. They had gone to one of the leading churches in the city to hear the Fisk Jubilee Singers—young men and women from the negro university in Tennessee. The congregation had assembled, densely packing both floor-space and galleries. The special singers for the evening had filed in and taken their seats in the central pews at the front reserved for them. The regular choristers were in their accustomed places. The hour for commencing the service had passed, but the usual voluntary on the organ had not begun, nor had the clergyman appeared. A vague feeling of uneasiness was beginning to fill the atmosphere and here and there whisperings were exchanged. The young colored folks, the youths in black coats, the girls in white dresses, sat impassive and quietly expectant.

At last the pastor emerged from the vestry, and stepped forward to the reading desk. He had an announcement to make—"a painful announcement," he called it. Despite his expostulations the organist had refused to take part in the evensong because of the presence of the colored singers.

A murmur of astonishment and suppressed indignation ran through the congregation. Even Jimmy, whose

unthinking contempt for the negro race he had hitherto never been at pains to conceal, could hardly restrain his feelings.

"What a bigoted idiot!" he whispered to Donald.

The latter, from his place of vantage well forward in one of the aisles, was studying the faces of the insulted guests of the church. They remained calm and dignified; no head was bowed in humiliation; not even a glance had been exchanged between neighbors, nor word of surprise or protest spoken. The proud self-control of those well-bred and well-educated men and women of a banned race was in itself the most splendid answer to the small-souled intolerance of the absent musician. As all eyes turned upon them, resentment against the un-Christlike deed changed to sympathy for the victims.

The clergyman held up his hand.

"But, if it is the good-will of this congregation," he continued, "we shall proceed with the service without any organ accompaniment. I know that our colored brothers and sisters can give us with their unassisted voices beautiful singing that will linger in our memories for many long days to come."

At this point one of the students rose from the ranks of his fellows, advanced to the clergyman, and spoke a few low words. His face was a fine one, pronouncedly negroid in type, but with every feature sharply chiseled as if cast in bronze; his bearing modest, but sustained by the consciousness of capability.

The pastor laid a hand upon his shoulder and resumed:

"Our young brother here kindly volunteers to preside at the organ. The usual service will now begin."

There was a general rustle of relief as the negro youth seated himself at the instrument. He had no music before him. For a minute he was busy adjusting certain stops and then his fingers rested upon the clavier. Thus

he sat still and statuesque for a few brief moments, while a deep hush descended upon the audience.

With the first clear, flute-like chords everyone present knew that a master hand was on the keys, and when the music rose and swelled in glorious cadences a murmur of admiration swept through the assemblage. Jimmy would have jumped from his seat, he might have cheered aloud, but for Mrs. Brodie's restraining hold upon his arm.

"Wheesht! wheesht! Recollect where you are, laddie," she whispered in mingled caution and rebuke.

Young Sheldon had always been a lover of music, and from early years good playing or singing had a powerful effect upon his emotions. But when these Jubilee Singers sang that Sunday night, he had never before been so moved, so lifted out of himself. The same with Donald—the tightly clenched hands, the intent face, showed the wave of deep feeling that surged over him. The style both of words and of music was so new that, over and above the beauty of the highly-trained voices, a thrilling effect was produced.

"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?"—the weird, plaintive, impassioned question rang forth in the sweet, bell-like notes of a soprano soloist; and then for answer came other voices, creeping in by twos or threes, now the baritones, next the contraltos, and then the deep rolling basses, till the whole sacred edifice was filled with the full-throated chorus of swelling harmonies, which gradually sank again and died away to silence, till once more, clear above the faint tremor of the organ notes, resounded the clarion demand—"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?"

And so from song to song, the audience listened in spell-bound entrancement. If the church organist had lingered in some obscure corner to listen to the effects of his declaration of a boycott, he must have crept home confounded and ashamed.

CHAPTER IX

"ALL IS WELL SINCE ALL GROWS BETTER"

"I never heard anything so grand," exclaimed Jimmy as he pushed back his chair at the close of supper and lighted a cigarette. "I'll never speak disrespectfully of a colored man again. What voices, what superb training! Great Scott, their faces shone as if the music came from their very souls!"

"Just as I thought," concurred Mrs. Brodie. "Did you ever see sweeter, purer faces than when those colored lassies seemed to lose all thought of their surroundings in the joy and glory of their singing?"

"It was great," murmured Donald.

"Then, that contemptible creature, the organist," went on Jimmy. "If you weren't present, Mrs. Brodie, I should be using stronger language still. I saw how you felt, Donald. He made us all ashamed of the color of our own skins."

"It was a pitiful business," replied Donald. "But I was proud of how those young college boys and girls bore the obvious wrong without sense of shame or loss of self-respect. It shows that the progress of the race is sweeping on. Individuals who have come to be refined and educated may suffer unmerited humiliations; but what does that count if the whole colored race is assuredly advancing?"

"My word, it was sad," said Jimmy. "What a tragedy life must be for the really intellectual negro!"

"No, you need not think like that. The really intellectual negro recognizes quite well that he is not a fair sample of his race as a whole—that he is merely the exception of today which proves the possibilities for a yet distant tomorrow. He knows quite well that behind the white races there are twenty centuries and more of civilization, while between his own people and mumbo-jumbo savagery there are only a few generations. Taking the two breeds as a whole, the difference is just as that between a child of five or six years and a matured man of forty. This is the attitude of mind in which we have to study the negro problem of America today."

"Aye, it's in the growing child that we can see every stage of man's gradual advancement," remarked Mrs. Brodie.

"Exactly," said Donald. "The negro race in America today is merely a child among civilized races, and therefore it has to be treated as a child. The kind but firm discipline applied to a child has to be applied to the backward race."

"How?" asked Jimmy.

"Well, for example, the first and natural defense of a child is to tell a lie; to its primitive mind the easiest way out of trouble is to say, 'I didn't do it.' The very instinct of self-preservation prompts the falsehood. But we don't despise the little one as we despise the grown-up liar. We teach it gently the shame of deceitfulness, and so in due time the child learns to be a truthful and honorable man. In just the same way we have to treat the ignorance and the faults of the negro race as the natural attributes of racial childhood. We have to be tolerant yet firm, teaching all the time, and thereby paving the way for racial evolution so that ultimately the grown child may be vested with the full responsibilities of a man. This, to my mind at least, marks

the relationship between the two races today in America which for the good of both must be maintained."

"It is certainly something to set a fellow's brain working," said Jimmy.

"But this is only one little bit of a much bigger argument," continued Donald. "When it comes to evolution of every sort, we have got to get away from considering the individual and think in units of the aggregate. 'All is well since all grows better'—that is the adage to fix in your mind. It is this thought that can make a Booker T. Washington a happy man, the colored organist a contented man. They are ahead of the common ruck of their race, but can feel that they are the harbingers of the general uplift which is advancing every day that the world swings round."

"What gave you an idea like that, Donald?" questioned Jimmy. He was growing skilled in leading his friend on and on in his occasional flights of rhetoric.

Donald hesitated a moment. He drew his chair nearer to that of Mrs. Brodie. Then he resumed:

"There, I'll tell you, Jimmy; my mother knows already. It was when lying out beneath the starlight on the sands of the Colorado desert. In the daytime the desert is the one place on earth where you can see farthest and see least; but at night you can see farther and see more than anywhere else. That is how it affected me many times. I have laid myself down and gazed up at the stars, which in the clear desert air seem to bespangle the sky in vaster myriads than we ever see them in a city like this. I was thinking, perhaps, of my own troubles, my own poor, puny, miserable self."

The mother's hand stole forth and rested on her son's; but she did not interrupt the flow of words.

"Then it would come to me that our own earth is only one speck of dust in the vast firmament outspread above me—that our whole solar system, sun and planets and moons, about the magnitude of which we are accustomed

to marvel, is but a dot among the countless thousands of partly seen and unseen solar systems encompassing it on every side and stretching out into space illimitable and unthinkable."

The speaker halted for a moment; the glow on his face subsided; then he continued in chastened tone:

"Next I would reverse the mental process, and draw my mind in again, coming back from the outpost stars to those above me, thence to the comparatively nearby planets, and finally to earth, and to myself, one insignificant human atom among perhaps fifteen hundred millions of my fellow human atoms. And in every hundred years, I reflected, those fifteen hundred millions of men, women and children are changed all over two or three times, disappearing, like sparks that stream up from a camp fire, into the unknown void of eternity. And in eternity what is a hundred years but a single second of time? A tick of the great clock of the universe—that's all!"

He paused and moistened his lips with the tumbler of water at his side.

"It was thoughts like these," he went on, "that brought me to realize that I, a miscroscopic molecule of animated dust, could count for but little in the great divine scheme of evolution—that it is the advancement of the whole universe that is being accomplished, that it is the advancement of all the humanity on a single world that has to be counted, the advancement of one particular race perhaps, or the advancement of a whole nation. To think down to any lower plane than this last one is to lose sight of the main thing. When you consider evolution in that light, the sufferings, the trials, the disappointments, the fights of the individual count as nothing. The wail of the atom is lost in the multitude's song of triumph. 'All is well since all grows better'—there again is the one sentence that sums up the whole stupendous problem of evolution."

"Yet each one of us plays a part in the divine scheme of evolution," interposed Mrs. Brodie.

"Assuredly," concurred Donald. "But when we remember the mighty edifice that all humanity, all eternity, is building, and realize our tiny share in the work, each of us has to sing small—yes, mighty small."

"We aren't even on the pug-mill," commented Jimmy with a smile.

"That's just it," flashed Donald. "The very same line of thought applies to evolution in all its phases, in all its grades. Thus in the great industrial struggle for the upraising of the toiling masses each individual can merely do his little and almost infinitesimal best. But it is only the aggregate result that counts, and therefore the suffering of individuals can be forgotten, nobly forgotten even by themselves, in the consciousness of general progress. For the whole brotherhood of banded men can join in the pæan that all grows better, and therefore all is well. This thought can give to the fiercely fighting trades-unionist contentment amid strife, and to the educated colored man comfort in spite of humiliation."

Mrs. Brodie had been gazing up into her son's face, watching as he spoke the play of expression on the mobile features. She had controlled herself to the end; but now the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Donald, my laddie, my dear laddie," she cried, "you should have been a preacher. That's what I always told your father, even when you were a wee bit of a bairn. He had aye the gift of talk, Jimmy," she went on, turning from Donald to his friend, "and at five years he could argue wi' ye like some old man."

Donald got up from the table and stood behind Mrs. Brodie's chair.

"Silly old mums," he laughed, kissing her and rumpling her hair with both his hands. "That's just the extravagant fancy every mother has about her own child. And as for preaching, I was never fit even to think of

that. Besides, there may be as useful work for me in a far humbler way, out in the work-a-day world, than if I had realized your fond dream of 'wagging my head in a pulpit.' There, now, dry your eyes."

Jimmy watched the little display of tenderness between mother and son with a wistful feeling in his heart of what he had missed in his own life. But he concealed his emotion by exclaiming enthusiastically:

"You are quite right, Mrs. Brodie. You should just hear Donald talk to the men during the dinner hour. When he gets warmed up to a subject, they hang on his words and drink in everything he says."

"Which shows their good sense," remarked Mrs. Brodie, with a well-satisfied smile.

"Come, now, mother, you're breaking out again," playfully remonstrated Donald. "And you, too, Jimmy, stop your kidding. Putting foolish notions into the old lady's head!"

"Old lady, indeed! I like that!"—with a fine show of indignation.

"Why, mother, it is the men who teach me," declared Donald.

"Of course. Keep on belittling yersel'," murmured Mrs. Brodie.

"These noon-hour talks are most valuable," he continued, ignoring the interruption, "for there are strenuous times ahead in the labor world, and it is well to learn the thoughts of those who are getting ready for the struggle. I tell you, Jimmy, a fairer distribution of the good things of life has got to come."

"You're aye thinking of others, Donald," persisted his mother. "You may have been a thrawn lad in your time, but your heart was ever in the right place."

"I see there's nothing for it but an opposition tune," laughed Donald, as he turned away, and with an indulgent smile toward his mother passed into the adjoining room, and seated himself at the piano. He sounded a

few firm chords, then drifted into a simple, sweet little reverie. Jimmy listened in surprise.

"I didn't know you could play, old man," he called out, at the close of the piece.

"Oh, rats, I can't play now! Look at my fingers." While he still touched the keys with one hand, he held up the other to show its calloused finger-tips. "But I like now and then to amuse myself at the piano." And he broke into the cheerful melody of a popular song.

"He would have been a splendid musician, Jimmy, if he had only persevered when a boy," exclaimed the irrepressible Mrs. Brodie.

The notes changed promptly to *allegro fortissimo.*

"Not far behind Paderewski," she cried, through the gathering storm of protesting harmonies.

But Jimmy caught the mischievous twinkle in her steel-grey eyes, and laughed aloud when Donald sought a last refuge from her pertinacious sounding of his praises in energetic pounding of the ivories.

That night Jimmy spent full two hours over his diary. He recorded the incident of the colored singers, and with retentive memory wrote down a further instalment of "The Philosophy of Donald Brodie" for his own future rumination and for the benefit of his sister as well. It was close on midnight when he rose from his desk. He threw open the window, and admitted the crisp, frosty night air.

The stars were shining bright, and he gazed up at them with new thoughts, with new understanding, but also with new despair at his own insignificance. Was the life of the atom worth living when the part it played was so very, very small? This was the question he was asking himself.

Then there came the reflection that mighty masses of matter, and mighty forces of every kind, are but aggregates of infinitesimal molecules of substance, or aggre-

gates of countless efforts each individually so tiny as to be almost impalpable. But for the upbuilding of the mass, for the generation of the irresistible driving power, every molecule must be there, every individual effort must be put forth even though it may count only as the beating of an insect's gossamer wings.

"Yes, we have each one of us our place in the universal scheme," mused Jimmy, as he raised his hand to close the window. "Every man must do his fragmentary share of the work if we are to keep up the jubilant cry that 'All is well since all grows better.' "

He still lingered for a few minutes, breathing deep into his lungs the cold, refreshing air. He was conscious of the trivial noises of the night—the chug-chug of an automobile, the dull hum of a street-car in an adjoining thoroughfare, the rustle of the wind among the bare twigs of the trees close at hand. But even as he listened he was vaguely wondering how Donald Brodie, the master-mechanic, the man of routine toil, had come to sleep out on the Colorado desert.

CHAPTER X

BONDS AND THE MAN

The nucleus of the Sheldon Manufacturing Company of San Francisco had been a small foundry and mine machinery repair shop, established in the early fifties of last century by James Sheldon, father of the present owner, after whom Jimmy had been named. He had been a skilled mechanic, a Philadelphia man, who had come across Panama to the golden Far West in one of the first rushes of eager argonauts. Having met with indifferent luck at the diggings, he had speedily realized that there was more money and surer money for him in the practice of his trade. So he had brought his modest sack of "dust" to San Francisco, and, unlike most miners of those days, had refrained from dumping it on a gambling table. He had, instead, purchased a goodly acreage of land, at that time a considerable distance from any habitation, but now well within the city's busiest manufacturing quarter, and with its fine water frontage an ideal site for a big plant. Thus had the foundation of the family fortune been laid.

James Sheldon was shrewd, industrious, and a fine workman, and soon he had a score of men in his employment. He never over-reached himself; he was contented with slow, steady and sure progress, paying his way and taking no speculative ventures. He was not

an educated man, knew very little about finance, but had the superlative wisdom of recognizing his own limitations. When he died he left to his only son Richard an establishment employing over a hundred men, and a name which stood for a guarantee of thorough workmanship among the users of machinery and of highest responsibility among banking men.

Richard Sheldon had first of all gone through a practical apprenticeship under his father's eye. Then, still a young man of twenty, he had been sent east to Lehigh University, Pennsylvania, where he had obtained the mathematical and technological training, the lack of which had been his father's principal drawback. He had been associated with the active management of the business for several years before its founder's death left him in sole control.

From that time onward the history of the Sheldon Manufacturing Company had been one of rapid and wide expansion. The business had been placed on an incorporated basis so as to define the interests of the widow, two daughters, and several other family legatees. But it had resulted that, either by death or purchase, all the minor holdings had gradually fallen into the son's hands. For twenty years Richard Sheldon had been sole and exclusive owner of the plant—he was the entire company, lock, stock and barrel.

Under his direction of affairs the business had branched out in a dozen new directions. Richard Sheldon had a broad grasp of the vast natural wealth of the Far West awaiting exploitation, and his quick perception had enabled him to be first on the manufacturing field whenever some important new line of enterprise opened up. Machinery for hydraulic mining, engines and pumps for irrigation, oil tanks and derricks, oil engines and oil burners, the handling of structural iron and steel, the erection of electric power plants—each new development of California's rich resources

meant a new department at the Sheldon works. So the business had grown and grown until it had become one of the most important on the Pacific Coast, with close upon a thousand men on its payroll.

Fortune had been kind, wondrous kind, to Mr. Sheldon—the earthquake and subsequent conflagration of 1906 had left his plant unshaken and unscarred. Even the old family home on the other side of the city had been saved, for the flames had been beaten back on the very slopes of Russian Hill, leaving a little rampart of stately residences overlooking a city of ruins.

But if he had been spared from material losses, the great disaster had of course affected his business, and it required a year or two before the works were again in full operation. He had been one of the lion-hearted leaders in the stricken city who had thrown all their energies into clearing away the débris of desolation and preparing, after incineration, for the regeneration of its multitudinous activities. And now, in the splendid new city, risen from its ashes hardly less marvelously than the palace of the Arabian story builded overnight by magic spells, he was one of the proud band of citizens who could look back with equanimity on a calamity the tragedy and pathos of which had been redeemed by the heroism, the fortitude, the unselfishness, the brotherly kindness it had evoked.

In the midst of resuscitated and stimulated general prosperity, the Sheldon Manufacturing Company had attained to still greater prominence than before in the industrial life of the community. It had also become more markedly than ever a storm-center—or rather the center of a threatening storm, for Richard Sheldon, a strong man, had hitherto been able to keep back the forces of militant trades-unionism. He was a man of the old school; he considered that his plant was his own, and his own alone, in part a heritage from his father's foresight and industry, but also in still greater measure

the creation of his own individual energies and ceaseless mental toil. He made no discrimination against unionists; he paid full union wages, and in some cases more; he recognized the justice in the arduous engineering trade of the unionist eight-hour day. But he held rigidly and inflexibly to certain cherished principles, such as that his shops should be open to all capable and competent workers whether or not they carried in their pocket a union card, that he had the right to employ and train as many apprentices as he deemed proper, and that no committee representing organized labor should ever dictate to him in the operation of his plant or the conduct of his business.

For eight or ten years there had been a grim and sustained trial of strength between the employer standing on his old defenses and the horde of trades-union leaders and delegates clamoring at his gates. But among the Sheldon employees was still a strong leavening of old-time hands, some of whom had even worked for Richard Sheldon's father, and also the sons of old-time hands who had come into the shops in natural succession and, finding fair treatment and secure employment, were more inclined to side with the master they had always known than with the, to them, irresponsible demagogues who might place them under the heel of a tyranny far less endurable than the conditions they understood and had been accustomed to accept. So there had as yet been no strike declared against the Sheldon Manufacturing Company, but it had long been a case of silently husbanding defensive strength on the one side, of determinedly increasing aggressive forces on the other side, for the final supreme effort in the contest that was bound eventually to come.

All through this tense struggle Arthur Wilmington had stood shoulder to shoulder with Richard Sheldon. The banker was comparatively a young man, even now well on the right side of forty, but the ironmaster, some

twenty years his senior, had found in the skilled financier an invaluable ally. Moreover, he was an ally of a younger school—vigorous, alert, thoroughly versed in all the conditions of the fight that was being waged, and therefore all the more appreciated by the stern old warrior of the older school. If ever Sheldon, in a moment of doubt, had been inclined to waver in his hard-shell doctrines, Wilmington had been at hand to reinstill into his mind the faith that it was these doctrines that were the only just ones, that they were the eternal principles of industrial life which, if surrendered to-day, would have to be recovered later on in a more disastrous struggle than any that could be waged at the present juncture. Wilmington was ever preaching the inherent antagonism between capital and labor. The unguent of peace, belief in their mutual helpfulness, had never touched and opened his eyes.

They were deep in a discussion this December afternoon in Mr. Sheldon's office, a commodious room right over the arched gateway of the works.

"Well, we have talked over this question now for a year or more, Wilmington, and I think we are agreed."

"Yes, I think we are pretty well agreed. As I've said, I am ready with a few friends to take up the whole bond issue of one million dollars. These investors stipulate that I assume the treasurership of the company, so that I may have a general supervision over the spending of their money. The million of cash will strengthen our hands for the big power-plant contracts in Oregon and Nevada, and no further time need be lost in putting in a shipbuilding slip or two. This will at last realize the ambition of your life, eh, Sheldon?"

"I tell you, man, with the Panama Canal now in operation there will be more business in shipbuilding than you dream of. And as I've always said, I'll never rest content till I've launched a battleship for Uncle Sam."

Wilmington smiled at the fine glow of enthusiasm on his old friend's face.

"Well, then, you may count on the money," he replied. "But before I embark on this new venture I should dearly like that other matter to be arranged."

Mr. Sheldon looked inquiringly through his gathered eyebrows.

"The matter that is really nearest my heart all the time," added Wilmington.

"Oh, about Leslie? Well, Arthur, my dear fellow, you know how I feel. You have been a devoted friend to my little girl all her life, and there is no one to whom I would so willingly entrust her future. But of course it is for Leslie to speak the word."

"I don't think Leslie will turn me down," said the banker, with suave complacency. "We have always got on well together. But, as you are aware, she put me off till Christmas for her answer, and I cannot but feel that this bond deal should be rushed through before then, while the market is favorable. We can never tell how things will stand after the holidays."

"Well, it is only a week or two till Christmas, so I don't see why Leslie and you shouldn't settle the question between yourselves without further delay. Wilmington, I should have been proud if my son had been the one to step into his father's shoes"—there was a note of sadness in his voice. "But as that is evidently impossible, it will be some consolation to me that Leslie's husband should carry on the great enterprise my father and I have built up."

"It will always be my pride to hold to the name of the old firm," responded the other, in a reassuring tone.

"I should like that for memory's sake," said the ironmaster reflectively.

"But why should we talk in this lugubrious strain?" suggested Wilmington, with a genial smile. "It will be

many a long day, my dear friend, before there need be any thought of who is to wear your shoes."

The remark brought back the wonted fire of resolution into Sheldon's face. He braced himself up, and threw back his shoulders.

"I guess that's right," he concurred, with a ring of self-confidence in his voice. "Well, as regards Leslie, I simply bid you go in and win, my boy." And he placed a kindly hand upon Wilmington's shoulder.

"Then I think I'll run up to the house now," said the latter, as he reached for his hat and gloves.

"You'll find her at home, as I happen to know," replied Sheldon.

A minute later the chug-chug of Wilmington's automobile was heard from under the archway.

At his departure a look of utter weariness had stolen into Mr. Sheldon's face. He now rested both elbows on his desk, and pressed his fingers against his eyes. The enthusiasm of a few minutes before had evaporated. He was vaguely wondering whether everything was right—the big new shipbuilding venture at his advanced age, the bonding of the plant that had never before carried so much as a thousand-dollar mortgage, the loss of Leslie from the home, aye, even the leaving of Jimmy alone in the outside world.

And when an old gray-headed cashier entered a few minutes later, the man promptly tiptoed away again out of the room. Mr. Sheldon had dropped his head upon his arm, and was asleep. Such a thing had not happened before in the memory of this the oldest employee of the firm.

Leslie was seated alone in the spacious library of her home. During the afternoon she had been busy in a sunshiny corner with her typewriting machine. But the sun had for some time departed, and the chilliness of the coming evening had made itself felt. She had

rung for a maid, and the log fire, already set, had been lighted. She was seated now in the flickering gleam of the crackling wood, and was deep in thought.

She had been typewriting into a loose-leaf memorandum book certain extracts from her brother's letters. The first page, following Jimmy's example, bore the title, "The Philosophy of Donald Brodie."

Leslie was pondering one of the last paragraphs she had been tapping out upon the keys, a remark by Brodie that thinking over what one has read is even more important than the actual reading itself. "When anyone apologizes for having kept me waiting," he had said, "I cheerfully reply that it is all right. For no time has really been lost; I've been busy thinking while I have waited." "I am beginning to learn this habit myself," Jimmy had written, "and it is wonderful how, hour after hour, when engaged on some job that is purely mechanical, I can go over things, fixing facts in my mind, or following out some line of argument."

The idea was being put into practice by Leslie herself. She looked the picture of idleness, coiled up in a great arm-chair. But in reality she was hard at work, weighing and amplifying the words of wisdom which had so appealed to her brother that he had been at pains to set them down in writing and even send them along for her benefit.

An hour had passed, and she was still musing in the deepening dusk and the now dull red glow of the oak logs. A visitor was announced—"Mr. Wilmington."

Leslie rose and greeted him pleasantly if with no effusive cordiality. He was carrying a big bouquet of white carnations.

"These are lovely," she said.

"Will you accept them?" he replied, placing the flowers in her hands. "Now they are more lovely still," he added gallantly, as Leslie nestled her cheek against the blooms.

Such outspoken compliments were so unusual with him, his present manner was also so self-conscious and constrained that the girl instinctively took alarm. She divined in a moment why he had come, and why he had brought the flowers. She laid the bouquet on a table, and motioned him to a seat. But he waited until she sat down, and then drew his chair close to hers.

He had obviously nerved himself for the ordeal; he had probably counted the minutes during which he would have her alone, for he went to his subject without any prelude.

"Leslie, dear, remember you promised me a definite answer before Christmas, and Christmas is not far away now."

"Really, Mr. Wilmington," she faltered, "so many things have been happening that I have hardly had time to think at all." She gathered herself together. "And before you say more, I should like to talk to you about Jimmy."

Wilmington's face clouded; he made a gesture of impatience.

"We must really think about getting Jimmy home," she continued, collected now and courageously determined to get to the issue that was dear to both herself and Norah—to fight it out, as Norah had been urging her day after day for weeks past.

"I'm sure I don't see what Jimmy has to do with our getting married," remarked the banker tentatively and trying to mask his disappointment.

"He has everything to do with it," rejoined Leslie. "You know as well as I do that during the past two months my father's health has not been what it used to be. Since he had that fainting spell he has not been the same man. The prolonged nervous strain is breaking him up; I can see it more and more every week. Father requires a rest. Jimmy should be home and at the works —that is the place for him."

"I can't imagine what particular use he would be at the works," retorted Wilmington irritably. "He has no experience; he has shown himself devoid of any sense of responsibility."

"Wait a moment," said Leslie, rising to her feet. "Let me try to prove to you how Jimmy has changed."

She went to her typewriter desk, and returned with the memorandum book on which she had been occupied most of the afternoon.

"I must first of all explain a little," she began, as she sat down again and rested the volume, still unopened, on her knees. "I am going to try your patience, I know"—with a bright smile that was meant to be encouraging.

"Oh, go ahead," he replied, with all the graciousness he could assume. "I'm listening, Leslie."

"Well, you've heard already that Jimmy has during the past three months formed a very close association with a working man in St. Louis—a man whose high character has made a profound impression on the boy."

"I hope it will last," commented Wilmington, with a faintly satirical smile.

"I feel confident it will," responded Leslie composedly. "But to understand the change in my brother you have really got to know something about the man who has wrought it—something about his mentality, if I may express it so. Jimmy himself sees this, for in writing to me he has related at great length conversations with his friend and incidents in their life together, showing how he has been brought to think and to act differently than he was accustomed to do before."

"A moral reformation," sneered Wilmington.

"Call it that, if you like," assented the girl, taking no offense in her earnest determination to hold to the course that duty had set. "But Jimmy has earned the right now to come home and take his proper place with father at the works. And the very best thing would be

for this friend to come along with him to San Francisco. I want your influence with father, Mr. Wilmington, to find a position for Mr. Brodie at the plant."

"What!" ejaculated Wilmington, taken quite aback with surprise. "So that wise guy has been trying to get a pull on you through Jimmy, has he? Just as I expected, just as I warned Sheldon from the start!" he added, in an audible aside.

His tone had become one of intense bitterness. To bring Jimmy Sheldon home would be to throw into confusion every one of his carefully matured plans. And to introduce this interloper would be to render the confusion more confounded still.

Leslie's face had flushed; he saw that he had wounded her dignity.

"Really, my dear," he hastened to say apologetically, "you have been getting some preposterous notions put into your head."

Although she had bitten her lip, and her fingers had tightened on the book, she replied quietly:

"You will be better able to judge of that when you have a clearer conception of what this man Brodie has come to mean for my brother."

"Then fire away; I am all attention."

And Wilmington leaned back in his chair with folded arms.

CHAPTER XI

THE TORMENT OF TANTALUS

"I have done all this with my own hands," began Leslie, displaying with pride the series of closely filled typewritten pages, as she slightly bent the flexible covers and ran a thumb across the edge of the leaves. "I have quite enjoyed doing it. In some ways, Mr. Wilmington, I should like you to take the book home and read it through. But that would be a breach of confidence on my part. However, you are going to be good, I see, while I read a few passages."

She bestowed a persuasive smile which the victim of her importunity acknowledged with a nod of resignation. Then she opened the volume at its first page.

"Here are several stray sentences I have assembled," Leslie went on. "I consider some of them worthy to be classed as aphorisms. Listen: 'Every good man's home-place is for him God's own country; it is not beauty of scenery or rich productivity that makes it this, but the loving-kindness and sweet friendships that surround him.' Isn't that a fine sentiment?" asked Leslie.

Wilmington made no reply; he was chewing the cud of reflection, pondering less the words that fell on his ears than the most effective way of crushing this prig of a philosopher.

Leslie resumed her reading:

"'Think the right, do the right, and think and do it now.' Again: 'The past is dead; its value lies in the experience gained; the present is the all-important moment; the future is unknown. But if the past only helps us to make the best use of the golden opportunities of the present, then assuredly will the future take care of itself. We need not worry about it. All is well.' What do you think of that?" she added, glancing up at the listener's face.

Wilmington was now ready with his rejoinder.

"Oh, it is just the smooth dope which a dozen so-called New Thought magazines are handing out to us today. They have the nerve to call it new, when it is all as old as the hills."

"Well, old or new," replied Leslie, "one cannot but think the better of a man whose mind is occupied by thoughts like these."

She turned over a page or two. "Here is a striking little story that Mr. Brodie told to Jimmy—new to me, although no doubt you will call it a chestnut. May I read it?"

"Surely. My time is yours."

"In the early days of the westward migration, an old man of Iowa had his home by a road much traveled by family wagons moving for the new lands of promise on the far Pacific Coast. It was his custom to invite the travelers to rest awhile and water their horses from his well. His invariable question was: 'Well, now that you're going west, how do you look forward to the change?' One man made reply: 'I'm thankful to be quit of my neighbors, with all their pesky, interfering and cantankerous ways.' 'I am afraid you will find your neighbors just the same in California,' sadly commented the old man. An hour or two later a second prairie-schooner came along, the owner walking by his team, wife and children piled on the driver's seat and under the tent canvas. 'So you've pulled up stakes,

friend,' said the roadside dweller. 'How are you going to like the new home?' 'Oh, fine, I've no doubt,' was the answer. 'There's only one thing makes me sad. Gad, but it's hard to part from all my dear kind neighbors!' 'You'll find your neighbors in California just the same,' said the ancient sage cheerily, as he gripped the wayfarer's hand."

Leslie looked up from the volume.

"Do you know, Mr. Wilmington, I can think over a story like that for days? What a lesson it teaches—that it is we ourselves who make our neighbors agreeable or disagreeable ones as the case may be."

"Oh, with the inevitable moral tagged on, it reads like an antiquated Aesop's fable masquerading in modern costume. Make the speakers a pelican, a fox and a crane, and we've all heard it long ago."

"No doubt the story comes from the long ago," assented the girl, with unruffled calm. "It is as old, perhaps, as human nature itself."

She mused a moment, her eyes cast down upon the typewritten page. Then a bright, almost mischievous look stole into her face, as she side-glanced at him and said:

"Perhaps as a banker this apothegm may specially interest you. I suppose it will sound like treason to one of your profession. Hear this: 'A dollar well spent may be better far than a dollar saved.'"

"What rot! The piling up of dollars is the piling up of strength." Wilmington felt on familiar ground at last, and the eagerness of his face attested the sincerity of his conviction.

"I used to think so, too," commented Leslie meditatively. "But I begin to believe that Mr. Brodie is right."

The very gentleness of her reply was a rebuke to the unnecessary vigor of his contradiction. His tone changed.

"Well, luckily the saving or the spending of a dollar doesn't matter much in your case, Leslie—will never be allowed to matter one way or the other."

He had leaned forward in his chair; for the moment he was once more the ardent suitor. But Leslie, placidly intent upon her manuscript, was apparently paying no attention. She had not understood, or preferred not to understand.

"I think you will be interested in this passage," she said. "They have been talking about right prices for goods, and Mr. Brodie goes on to say: 'For example, the selling price of a piano should not be determined by the standard of lowest possible cost of manufacture. First and foremost the instrument should provide for the comfort and happiness of all who have contributed to its making—right from the men who hewed the lumber for its mahogany case, or dug the iron ore that eventually provided its taut steel strings, all along the line to those who covered the hammers with felt or polished its ivory keys. A thousand workers, each fed and clothed and gladdened and enabled further to benefit themselves by their daily toil, not a thousand slaves ground down to the merest pittance of a wage that gives them only subsistence, the mere right to live—that's how a piano should be made and sold. It may cost $50 more when it comes to be marked up on the price list, but on the identical principle applied to himself the would-be owner of the instrument has the $50 extra in his pocket wherewith to make the purchase. Content and plenty for all who shared in the work, and even the buyer not one nickel poorer by the all-round change—that's the spirit which will put an end to the sweating of labor. And when the new era comes, the song of the piano will make sweeter music than before. And in the same way we shall like our garments better when we know that their stitches meant a woman's smiles and not a woman's tears, and we shall eat our daily bread

with greater relish when we are sure that there is bread in plenty in every home besides our own.' "

"Ideal, perhaps, but none the less the dream of a visionary," commented Wilmington.

"The men who built the railroads across the prairies and over the Sierras were visionaries."

"What's that? They were doers—the real thing—the practical men of whom America is so justly proud."

"I am thinking of the still greater men who conceived the work—the men who in their mind's eye could dot the empty prairies with the great cities of to-day, bringing the logging camps into the forests, the mining camps into the mountains, could make the east grip hands with the west and so by community of interest at last weld together a true nation. Were not these men visionaries—inspired visionaries?"

"Your flights of fancy get beyond me, Leslie, my dear."

"Then let not the jungle-dwellers whose feet are on the ground scoff at their fellows who have climbed to the tree tops and glimpsed the laughing hills, the rippling streams, and the smiling valleys that lie beyond."

"Fine, fine!" he exclaimed, with ironical enthusiasm. "Is that Donald Brodie's or yours?"

"It is truth," she replied simply, as she turned the pages.

"And again how true this is," she went on: 'There should not be fifty applicants for a job, each trying to shoulder the other aside so that he may be the one to obtain it. Selfish competition of this kind will be eliminated only when the world of work provides for all its members—when it is counted the duty of all that none shall be without adequately remunerated employment. What we have to aim at is a brotherhood of productive usefulness. Then the filling of any particular job becomes simply a readjustment for the benefit of all, not,

as now, the rising of one individual by trampling on the bodies of his less sturdy competitors.' "

"Sickly sentiment!" sneered Wilmington. "Competition among men is the life of business—the secret of the world's success. Of course, a good few poor devils get knocked down and rolled over. But that's just as it should be. Read your Darwin about the survival of the fittest."

"But we're not all Darwinists in these days," suggested Leslie. "Do you really think that brutal strength should alone convey the right to human happiness?"

"Or brains—don't forget the brains, Leslie."

"Very well—are brutal strength and subtle wile to monopolize the good things in existence? Or shall the doctrine of the survival of the fittest be so ennobled that those among us most richly gifted with strength or ability shall count it their highest privilege to help all their fellow-beings to equal advantages with themselves?"

"Help yourself first. That's the law of human progress. God helps those who help themselves. The proverb is as old as creation."

"But even a proverb may be a mis-translation of truth. 'God helps those who help their brothers.' How would that read as the modern revised version?" she asked, with a little smile.

"Oh, brothers again!" objected Wilmington. "The very word begins to make me sick."

"It makes me think—and pause—and readjust my ideas," said Leslie slowly and pensively, her eyes downcast on the written page beneath her fingers. A moment's silence, then she added in a low voice, just softly breathing the words: "Since I began to get acquainted with the philosophy of Donald Brodie."

"Philosophy! I should rather call it bunkum—the merest bunkum," laughed Wilmington contemptuously.

But she made no rejoinder—when argument sinks to gibes and sneers, no rejoinder is required.

There followed a little pause. By his very silence the blusterer admitted defeat. He was uncomfortably conscious that in this duel of thought the offensive lay with his opponent all the time, and that his defensive was growing weaker and weaker with every probing thrust.

Leslie had turned over a page or two. Her finger now rested at another specially marked paragraph.

"Let me read just one thing more," she said. "Mr. Brodie is speaking. 'There is never smoke without fire, Jimmy, but don't forget that there may be fire without smoke. Take what looks to be a dead camp fire, for instance. The white ashes seem innocent enough. But poke them with a stick, let the fanning breeze into the smoldering depths of the pile, and you'll find there fire to set the whole forest ablaze. The sleeping camp fire is like a strong man, or a strong trade union, or a strong nation—all the more to be held in respect because there is no sputtering of Roman candles, just the fire of strength that is nursed under the ashes of experience and self-restraint so that the spark never dies out, but is ready to leap into flame and assert its might when provocation may become unendurable.'"

Wilmington sat bolt-upright; a queer look came into his eyes.

"That fellow's dangerous, Leslie," he said decisively. "What you are reading now is the usual claptrap of street-corner anarchists."

"But isn't it true?" she asked pointedly.

"True!" he retorted defiantly. "It's the mush the hungry crowd takes for truth and swallows. It's ideas like this about the slumbering strength of the working classes that are everywhere breeding discontent and unrest."

"Or is it the discontent and unrest that give birth to the ideas, Mr. Wilmington? Are you not putting the cart before the horse—mistaking the cause for the effect?"

"Pshaw! That's just a woman's way to meet an argument by asking questions. I'm sorry to find you filling your mind with such dangerous nonsense, Leslie."

"To take carefully reasoned statements and call them mush or claptrap or dangerous nonsense is hardly argument," she mildly suggested. "But now your interest is so thoroughly aroused, I'm going to trespass yet again on your good nature. It is the last time, though, I promise. I should like you to get Mr. Brodie's views about the dignity of labor." She was turning over the leaves of the volume. "Here's the place. Take the book, if you like, and read the passage to yourself. You will perhaps grasp the full meaning better. You won't need to turn over; it is all upon one page."

Wilmington languidly submitted to being spoon-fed with this final dose of superlative wisdom. He affected interest in the opening sentences, but as he read on his face showed quickened curiosity, then overmastering impatience.

"Well, if that isn't the limit!" he at last exclaimed, holding up the book with a finger on one place. "Listen to this piffle: 'Let your very office-boy understand that your business cannot be a success without his loyal and efficient help. His feeling of personal pride will make for loyalty and efficient service.' The man who wrote that writes himself down an ass."

"And why?"

"He simply doesn't know the first A, B, C of commercial life. He wants everybody to be like himself—the typical self-conceited and pushful Smart Alick who is always wanting to run the other fellow's business for him. Now if I had an office-boy interfering with my affairs I would promptly kick the little beggar through the transom. He is paid to do as he is told, and if he doesn't like it there are a dozen others keen for his job. I don't require a junior partner to stick on the postage stamps, thank you."

"I hardly think you fully grasp Mr. Brodie's philosophy," demurred Leslie. "Might it not be fine if employees in a bank or factory, or men engaged in any great undertaking, counted themselves all as junior partners? What an impetus to united effort! What a bond of brotherly union!"

"Union!" he cried. "Brotherly union! You don't mean to tell me, Leslie, that you are taking all this stuff seriously? The dignity of labor, forsooth! We know exactly what that means—to do the least work for the most money. Pshaw!" And, closing the volume, he tossed it lightly on to her lap.

She smoothed its covers quite lovingly. Her eyes were sparkling.

"By the same argument, then, the dignity of capital lies precisely in paying the least money for the most work."

He hesitated a moment. "All right, put it that way if you like. Capital and labor are two mutually antagonistic forces. It is a law of political economy. They have to fight against each other for every inch of disputed ground."

"That was another of my old beliefs. But now I am coming to see things somewhat differently, ever since Jimmy began to send me these views of a working man —a plain working man, he calls himself."

She was hugging the book to her breast now, and a spasm of fierce jealous anger contorted Wilmington's face.

"A mighty slick schemer to have got your ear through Jimmy, who appears to have substituted charlatanism for champagne."

A flush stole into Leslie's cheeks. He saw he had again offended her.

"I don't mean to be hard on Jimmy," he corrected himself. "It's the other fellow I'm getting at."

There was a moment of constrained pause. Then

Leslie resumed, with fine self-control that suffered not even a quiver of the voice to betray her displeasure: "I want Jimmy home as soon as possible, Mr. Wilmington, and, as I remarked before, I think it would be a good thing if he brought with him—that other fellow."

She faintly smiled as she gave him back his own words. He looked as if he did not know whether to resent or be amused by her audacity.

"I know it cannot be done at once," she went on thoughtfully. "It will take a good few months yet before Jimmy can save his cherished amount of one hundred dollars. Nor do I want to interrupt this very commendable effort at self-discipline. But it may also take papa several months before he can be brought round to give Jimmy full forgiveness. That is where you can help me, Mr. Wilmington. I know your influence with my father."

Under the spell of her gentle look and conciliatory words his brusque asperity had completely disappeared. His answer came in quite an ingratiating tone:

"Of course you wish Jimmy back and safe in his own home, Leslie dear. I realize all that. But as you yourself say, it will be best for him to go on working a while as he is doing now. He will have a better claim on his father's leniency when he has proved himself capable both of earning money and of saving it. I promise you this—I'll bring Mr. Sheldon round to that way of thinking."

"Oh, I'll be so grateful!" she cried, with warm impulsiveness. "And it is just my anxiety to have the good results made permanent that I would have Mr. Brodie here."

"I understand. Well, I'll see what I can do to find a mechanic's place for the man."

She noticed with some little surprise the patronizing manner in which he disposed of a matter that was properly her father's exclusive business. But she was too

overjoyed to quibble about trifles. She had won the banker's powerful aid, and for all their sakes—Jimmy's, Norah's, and her own, even her father's—this was the great end achieved.

"That is kind of you. He will be so helpful to my brother."

"Yes," said Wilmington reflectively, and with a grim smile that was the spectre of his thoughts. "Jimmy will probably need him."

"Indeed, we may all need him," replied Leslie, she too almost unconsciously giving voice to her inward musings.

But Wilmington was preoccupied with his own meditations. He had risen to his feet, and was toying with the bouquet of carnations resting upon the table. Several new ideas had been suggested to his mind.

Under the influence of this fellow Brodie, young Sheldon, always weak, susceptible, and erratic, bade fair, even if the caprice of sobriety continued, to become something of the same kind as his mentor—a faddist, a socialist, perhaps even a trades-unionist. And the son, loaded up with such doctrines, would soon be more sharply at variance with his father than in the old rackety days—would be all the more impossible as a serious factor in the future conduct of the business. Great guns! The bringing of Brodie to San Francisco might even help Wilmington himself to the accomplishment of his plans. A dangerous trouble-breeder might be the very man wanted at the proper time.

This train of thought had passed through the banker's brain like a flash. He turned to Leslie, a pleasant smile now lighting his finely chiseled and really handsome face.

"There, my dear, I am going to do everything you wish. We'll bring Jimmy home, and get his friend Brodie here as well."

She dropped the book upon the cushion of the chair from which she had risen, and extended both her hands.

"I am so delighted to hear you speak like this!"

He had taken her hands; he would have drawn her to him if he dared. But a subtle thrill from her nerves told him that he might not thus far venture.

"Now what about ourselves?" he contented himself with asking.

Leslie's bright face clouded a little, but she continued unflinchingly to meet his gaze. The man before her had grown naturally to be a part of her life. He had always been attentive, had helped her as a little girl with her lessons, taught her to ride, and in other ways contributed to her childish pleasures. Of late she had begun tacitly to realize that it was her father's desire that she should marry Wilmington; he himself had some months before pleaded for her hand. But while she had thus been brought, almost as a matter of course, to accept his attentions, the question as to whether she really loved him had not seriously entered her mind. In fact, passion of any kind had never yet swept over her placid temperament. Since leaving college she had been the mistress of her father's house, and devotion to him and her absent brother had continued to be the dominating motive of her life. So she could still look her childhood friend, even though now an acknowledged suitor, frankly in the face, without a blush of self-consciousness.

Her answer came unhesitatingly:

"That question, as I said before, must wait, Mr. Wilmington. My duty just now lies with my father. Until he is relieved of some of his anxieties, and is stronger in health, my home must be his home."

He let go her hands.

"I am so sorry to disappoint you," she added, with sincere sympathy in her look and in her tone.

The old defiant glare came into his eyes—he was de-

fiant, not of her but of the tantalizing delays that seemed to be frustrating his fondest hopes.

"I can wait," he said, with quiet determination that showed his enduring confidence of ultimate success.

But when he had passed through the gateway of the house, and had seated himself in his automobile, the rancor of having suffered obstruction to his plans was bitter in his heart. Leslie was forgotten. She was the end; he was thinking now only of the means whereby he meant to make doubly sure of gaining her.

"That little reprobate of a brother is being taught the so-called dignity of labor—that the man at the pug-mill controls the job. But when he gets here he won't be long in finding out that it is the man with the mortgage who has got the cinch on everybody and everything. It will be my first business now to put through that bond issue."

A stray dog gave a yelp of terror as it jumped almost from under the speeding wheels. Wilmington laughed aloud. The incident was in exact keeping with his mood.

CHAPTER XII

MISSION BELLS

Christmas eve had come round, a night in St. Louis of blustering wind and driving snow that made it very comforting to be indoors, with a good old-fashioned fire ablaze to cheer the eye and warm the heart even though furnace heat had robbed it of prime utility.

"I've been aye accustomed to an open fireplace, Jimmy," explained Mrs. Brodie, as with a little brush she flicked the ashes from the bars of the grate and tidied up the hearth.

They had just "come ben," as she called it, from the dining room to the parlor.

"So that grand bronze plate," she continued, "with the flower-vase hammered on it has gone to the closet for to-night. To take in Christmas and no be sitting round a fire would be little short of sacrilege. Draw up your chair, laddie, and Donald, you shut off the heat at the register. My, but this is nearly as good coal as we used to get in Ayrshire!"

"No, no," protested Donald, with a roguish look in his eye. "That's altogether too great a concession, mother dear. America can't hold a candle to Scotland. Isn't that so, Jimmy? You've been there."

Young Sheldon grinned in discreet silence. He enjoyed these playful family scraps, old Caledonia pitted

against young Columbia, and was not going to spoil sport by any ill-considered remark of his.

Mrs. Brodie bridled up with great dignity; the irony had touched her Celtic pride.

"Oh, it's small credit to you, Donald, to be poking fun at me like that. You've every reason to be proud of the land o' your fathers."

"Certainly, when it gave me such a dear old mother," he laughed, putting an arm around her waist. "But I've got to keep a corner in my heart for the land of my birth, now haven't I?"

"Go along with you," she replied, with a toss of her head as she shook herself free. But she continued, in mollified tone and with the dry humor of her race: "You're no like an Irishman I once knew. He had first seen the light in Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, but was aye going around complaining of his misfortune in not having been born in his native land."

"I hope they shipped him home to Tipperary," chuckled Jimmy.

"No fear! He just made the best of his bad luck, and got into the pork-packing business in Kansas City. So, while in the case of his grandfather the pig was the gintleman that paid the rent"—this with a touch of the Irish brogue—"with him it is the gintleman that provides automobiles, yachts and fat cigars."

"Which shows that Missouri can go one better than ould Ireland," cried Donald gleefully. "It was sentiment versus sausages, and sausages won out. I'll back the sausages every time."

"Oh, I notice that you show your appreciation when they come on the table," retorted Mrs. Brodie. "But you ken fine that you're just havering. You don't mean what you say." She was speaking in all earnestness now. "You are sentiment clean through, Donald, from the tips of your fingers to the very marrow of your bones."

"Then I'm glad, mother mine," replied Donald, "for it's a true saying that sentiment rules the world. Come on, we'll give Jimmy a good old sentimental Scottish song, one of many and many that have traveled to the farthest corners of the earth, and can bring tears to the eyes every time. Bonnie Charley, mother. Here's your music; sit you down."

Although none might know it but himself, Donald Brodie's heart was full that first Christmas eve at home since the days of wandering. His repressed feelings were thrown into the song, and the emotional effect upon his listeners certainly revealed the power of sentiment he had just been extolling.

The closing stanza rang forth in rich soft notes:

"Sweet the laverock's note and long,
Lilting wildly up the glen;
But aye to me he sings ae song—
Will ye no come back again?

"Back again! Back again!
Will ye no come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be—
Will ye no come back again?"

When Donald ceased, his mother leaned forward and raised a hand to her forehead. Jimmy was sitting bolt-upright in his chair, his face pale, his lips trembling.

The singer was taken somewhat aback at the latter's display of feeling.

"Hullo, sonnie," he said kindly, but gravely too. "I didn't imagine that that old Jacobite song was going to upset you."

"It's a song Norah used to sing," faltered Jimmy, gulping down the lump in his throat.

"Norah? Oh, yes, your sister's chum. Well. now, mother, sit round. I'm going to tell Jimmy that story

I have already told you about the mission bells. Here, take this rocker, and let me fix the cushion for you."

Mrs. Brodie had been moved by the song, but not to tears. She gave her son a fond look as he settled her comfortably.

"Spare yersel', laddie," she whispered.

Donald gave her a reassuring glance as he took a chair close by her side.

"You know, Jimmy," he began, "I have not always been the stay-at-home fellow you think me to be. I spent a whole year in Southern California, and before that I roamed about through Colorado and Arizona. Well, I'm not going to say too much about this episode in my life; the past is a man's own."

"A real sensible remark," interjected Mrs. Brodie.

"Now, here is a strange thing that happened. I must first tell you, though, that when I was a little kiddie, my mother used to sing me to sleep with that song about Bonnie Charley. It was my favorite song. I would take no other; and night after night I would listen to it without ever tiring of words or music. Well, one night I was outside the town of Riverside. Know it?"

"I've never actually been there," replied Jimmy, "but everyone knows about Riverside—the garden city among the orange groves."

"It was a dark, silent night," continued Brodie, "and I was resting among a little clump of eucalyptus trees, when all of a sudden, faintly borne upon the breeze, came the sound of bells, the softest, sweetest bells I had ever heard. They were playing a tune, and that tune was the refrain of the song my mother used to sing—'Will ye no come back again?' Jimmy, I thought at first that my mother was dead, and that it was her voice from heaven appealing to me."

Donald now had his mother's hand in his.

"Puir laddie!" she sighed.

"But soon the music died away, and I was alone again

in the hushed darkness. Well, it was only some days afterward that I came to know they were real bells—the bells of the Mission Inn at Riverside. But to cut a long story short, it was their call to me that night across the orange groves that brought me back to duty, to home, and to my mother."

He raised her hand and kissed it.

"No wonder, Donald," said Jimmy, "your heart thrills with emotion when you sing that song."

"That's just it, Jimmy. I can never think of the song of the bells but I remember what it did for me."

"And for me," echoed his mother.

"It has always seemed to me that it was just one soul calling through the night to another soul, using the medium of the old mission bells."

"It was that—it was surely that," concurred Mrs. Brodie fervently. "I had kept praying for you every waking hour while you were gone. And many a night I knelt by your empty bed and thought o' your old favorite song."

The tears had started to her eyes; but Donald soothed her by a pressure of the hand.

"And no incident in my whole life," he went on, "has so profoundly moved me or so greatly influenced me. The bells made me think of my dear good old mother at a time when I badly needed to think of her."

He sat for a minute, silently gazing into the fire. Then looking up, he resumed:

"And cannot we all go through life, Jimmy, ringing mission bells? A gently spoken word at the proper moment, the kindly touch of a hand, may bring penitence to a wayward heart or hope to a broken heart, may mend a shattered career, may save a soul from perdition. That's what I mean when I say, let us all ring out the mission bells."

Donald himself was affected by his own words; his eyes were filmed with tears.

Sheldon leaned forward toward him, and spoke in broken tones:

"Then that is why you saved me, Donald? That's why you picked me out of the gutter? You rang the mission bells for me."

"And you have rung them often since for me, Jimmy. You don't know how I have come to value your companionship. Your brave and cheerful smile ever since has been an inspiration. You have helped me, you are helping me every day of my life. I have always longed for just such a comrade as yourself."

Their hands met and exchanged a heartfelt grip.

"Oh, but I can't let you think of me like that," said Jimmy. "It is I who owe everything to you, Donald."

"No, no, Jimmy. The song of the bells is mutual helpfulness."

"He's quite right," exclaimed Mrs. Brodie. "It was just a real chum Donald needed. Since he brought you to our home, Jimmy, he's been a finer man than ever."

"Now, now, mother," he protested.

"You just be quiet, Donald. I'll have my say; it's my turn now. But dinna fear I'm going to sound your praises, after the way you've been teasing me to-night. Listen, though, I've got a surprise for both of you. There are two big Christmas boxes in the cellar downstairs."

"How's that?" asked Donald.

"Oh, I've had a letter, too, and I am following my instructions. The cases arrived a day or two ago. But you weren't to have them till Christmas eve, so I kept them well hidden in the basement."

"Think of that, Jimmy! Come along, old fellow, and we'll have these mysterious packages up here."

"Not quite so fast, young man. You may want the cellar key, I'm thinking, and I've a good mind to keep you waiting till the clock strikes twelve."

"No you don't. Hand it over, mother."

After a make-believe struggle, the key was produced from the deep-down pocket of an underskirt, and Donald, with Jimmy at his heels, made for the stairhead that led to the lower regions.

They were goodly sized and substantially made boxes, and when Donald had surveyed the quality of their fastenings he discarded the hammer and chisel he had brought up from the basement in one of his pockets, and returned for a more formidable weapon of attack. Operating a big nail-puller with skilful hands, he soon had both lids disengaged. But the first one was not raised until the other was ready as well.

"Now for the solution of this mystery of mysteries," exclaimed Donald, as he whipped off both covers simultaneously and stacked them against the wall.

But there were wrappings of thick paper to be removed before the contents were disclosed. This was Mrs. Brodie's task; she would brook no interference. At last she came to the last layer on which rested a big Christmas card decorated with poppies of deep orange hue.

"My word, isn't that pretty!" she exclaimed, holding the card before her admiringly. She manifested no desire to hurry over her inspection.

"What's pretty?" inquired Donald curiously from across the table.

"Now I wonder what you would call these flowers?" she proceeded, with leisurely contemplativeness. "Just wait till I wipe my glasses."

She calmly deposited the card face down upon the table, but Donald, with a dexterous sweep, got it into his own possession.

"Oh!" he murmured, as, having read the inscription, he gave the card to Jimmy.

"Californian poppies!" cried the latter at his first glimpse of the painted flowers. Then his glance fell on the words:

"For Jimmy—with love from Leslie and Norah."

His face flushed with delight. He had been wondering all the evening, with a dull sense of disappointment, why there had been no Christmas greeting from his sister. Now he understood.

"From Norah, too!" he exclaimed. "What is it, Mrs. Brodie?" he asked eagerly.

"Well, I'm beginning to think that it's a Carnegie free library," she responded, as she raised the last sheet of protecting paper. "Come here and look for yoursel'."

Jimmy went round the table and gazed down on a closely packed double row of books, of various sizes and shapes, their bindings severely plain, but the whole display quite imposing. At random he drew forth one medium-sized volume.

Donald was by his side, and read aloud the title on the back.

" 'Manual of the Steam Engine'—I know it; that's a standard work."

Then he bent over the box and ran a finger along the double row, reading out title after title, and here and there the name of some specially distinguished author. At last he raised his eyes.

"Why, Jimmy," was his enthusiastic exclamation, "you have treatises here on every subject that interests the mechanical engineer—steam boilers, the combustion of gas and oil, the strength of materials, the mechanics of machinery, power and power transmission. The latest word on everything! You have just about the finest technical library a fellow could wish for, and I tell you skilled advice must have been taken in making such a selection."

"Well, well," murmured Jimmy, his heart too full to say much, "it was good of them to take all that trouble."

"You see, they're determined to make you a great

engineer, laddie," remarked Mrs. Brodie, with a smile of real motherly affection. "Now we'll take a peep into the other box. Socks and underwear, no doubt."

"Not on your life," asseverated Donald. "It's as heavy as pig iron." And he rubbed an imaginary dislocation of his right shoulder.

"Another Christmas card, I do declare!" remarked his mother, after she had discarded a few layers of wrapping paper. "Oh, but that's just lovely!" Then she read something, and hurriedly passed the card to Jimmy.

His eyes fell on the rich red of a poinsettia.

"Ah, the dear old poinsettia!" he cried. "That's another Californian flower. Bully! Oh, this is bully! The card's for you, Donald." And he handed it over.

Donald read in silent surprise:

"For Mr. Donald Brodie

"With kindest regards from Leslie Sheldon and Norah Carew."

"This must be some practical joke of yours, Jimmy," he said, as the card dropped from his fingers to the table.

"No, sirree," the other protested, darting to the case and ripping off the last paper. "The Encyclopedia Britannica—latest edition! Hurrah for California!"

Donald gazed down on the nested volumes in their elegant morocco bindings.

"Oh, they are far too kind," he said gratefully.

"But I've often heard you say a good encyclopedia was just what you wanted," exclaimed Mrs. Brodie, with self-satisfied complacency, as she bestowed a knowing wink on Jimmy.

"How can I ever thank them?" continued Donald.

"Their pleasure is even greater than yours, old man, I'm certain. And there won't be a better used set of these books in all America."

Mrs. Brodie's eyes had been busily peering, and she caught sight of some package showing beneath the space that had been occupied by the book withdrawn from the first box.

"What's doon there, I'm wondering?"

In brief time Jimmy had all the overlaying volumes out on the table.

"By gosh!" he cried. "A bunch of records for the newsboys' club!" And he held aloft triumphantly another Christmas card, reproducing in sepia one of the old California missions.

"Isn't that great?" exclaimed Donald.

But young Sheldon had found yet another package—this time a cardboard box.

It was inscribed: "To be opened by Jimmy."

With eager fingers he undid the narrow ribbon securing the lid. Amidst cotton wool reposed a piece of jewelry, with a card beneath it.

"A pin for you, my dear Mrs. Brodie," he declared, as he gave her a kiss on the forehead, and then placed the trinket in her hand.

"My certy! A gold brooch! And set with a real cairngorm! Now, how in the name of wonder did the young ladies ever come to ken that I was a Scotswoman?"

"I guess Jimmy is responsible for that, mother," said Donald, as he too kissed her. "Let me fasten it in your lace." Then he stepped back with his head on one side, as he surveyed the effect of the decoration. "Yes, it's just fine. You look so grand a lady that I hardly recognize you."

"Go along with your nonsense!"

"And here is something else, Mrs. Brodie," announced Jimmy, unfolding some tissue paper. "A silver belt-buckle for Frieda."

Frieda was the name of Mrs. Brodie's Swedish maid.

"Now, who would have expected that?" murmured

Mrs. Brodie, deeply touched by this final act of thoughtfulness. "Won't Frieda be pleased! She's at her church the now, but she'll get it in the morning. I'm sure she was going to ask for another raise in wages, but perhaps after this she'll let me off till Easter."

There was laughter from the two young men, in which Mrs. Brodie joined without exactly understanding the cause of the hilarity.

"By the way," she said, after a moment, "when you go upstairs to-night, look under your beds. You'll find fine mahogany book shelves for these libraries. They came wrapped in burlap, but I got them all ready for you, so that you can commence your new studies this very night."

"No, mother, you don't mean it. Listen!"

Donald's eyes were fixed upon the clock on the mantel-shelf. For a moment there was the tense silence of expectancy.

Then there came through the wintry night the first deep boom of a church bell.

It was Christmas morning.

CHAPTER XIII

IN SECRET CONCLAVE

It was after midnight, and the Bohemian cafés of San Francisco were still ablaze with light and gay with music—the orchestral strains of some languorous valse or the song of a bayadere in costume moving among the little groups of revelers. But the decorous and domesticated ones among the populace had sought their rest.

In a certain fashionable apartment house within a stone's throw of Union Square most lights were extinguished. But the occupant of one sumptuously furnished bachelor's flat was awake, and actually giving greeting to a belated visitor.

"Help yourself, Mr. Bradshaw. The boy will take your hat and bring some cold seltzer."

The speaker was Arthur Wilmington, his visitor a big broad-shouldered man with a strong, rugged face; "the boy," a middle-aged Chinese servant of the old style, who wore a dangling pigtail and embroidered slippers, loose flowing garments of blue silk, and a simpering smile that was both the badge of pleased obedience and the mask of the real thoughts at the back of his oriental cranium.

Bradshaw tipped the decanter with a sparing hand; it was but a mere thimbleful of whisky the Chinaman

drowned with the sparkling contents of the siphon. When the liquor stand was placed before the host, the latter helped himself only a little more liberally than his guest had done. Next the noiselessly moving and eternally smiling servitor brought a tray laden with several boxes of cigars, and, when both men had made their selection, placed a taboret with ash-receiver and match-holder by the side of each chair. Then he flitted from the room like a gaily plumaged moth, the door closing behind him softly as if it had been a well-padded cushion.

"Light up and make yourself comfortable," continued Wilmington, setting the example by striking a match and leaning back in his seat. "I sent for you, Mr. Bradshaw, because I think the time has come when you and I should have a plain, straightforward talk. And I chose a late enough hour for you to be free from all other possible engagements."

"Well, you know, Mr. Wilmington, that I am always pleased to meet and talk things over with any representative of capital. It is not on our side that such conferences are balked at—it is the employers who shun them."

"That's been no doubt true in the past. But times are changing. No sensible employer now refuses to meet a recognized unionist leader like yourself."

"Your friend Sheldon, though, won't allow a delegate inside his works."

"It is about the Sheldon Manufacturing Company I want to speak."

"For Mr. Sheldon—are you speaking for him?" asked the labor man, with a flash of quickened interest in his eye.

"No," replied the banker, with slow deliberation. "I am going to speak for myself. This is a preliminary consultation that may eventually lead to most important results as affecting both the ironworks and the unions. But meanwhile, as my message stipulated, even the fact

of your coming here to my rooms is strictly between ourselves, and everything we say is equally confidential. This you quite understand?"

"Sure. And you know well that Dan Bradshaw never yet went back on his word."

"I am perfectly aware of that, Mr. Bradshaw, or, to put it plainly, you would not be here to-night."

"Then go ahead, sir. I'm prepared to hear all you've got to say."

"It is a matter of public notoriety that your federated unions are getting ready for a big strike against the Sheldon Manufacturing Company."

"If you know it, that's all right. I am not in a position to say more at present."

"Well, of course, such a fight is bound to come sooner or later. But I don't wish it to happen now."

"You are hardly the one to decide that question," replied Bradshaw, with a cold smile.

"Probably not. But in the interests of all concerned I give you warning that your unions will be blundering up against the biggest defeat they ever encountered."

"I'm from Missouri—I've got to be shown, Mr. Wilmington."

"Which I shall proceed to do. There are times, I believe, when cards should be frankly laid face up on the table. I make no stipulation for you to show your hand. But I am going to show you mine."

Wilmington took a sip or two of his highball, and, under cover of a few puffs to keep his cigar alight, mentally arranged his next words. His opponent maintained silence, smoking composedly while he watched the banker's countenance.

"Are you aware that just before the Christmas holidays the Sheldon plant, land and buildings were bonded for a million dollars?"

"That's news to me. I didn't know Sheldon was hard up."

"He is not hard up. You will understand presently. But I want you to be fully satisfied on each point. You have only to go to the county recorder's office to-morrow, where the deed of trust has just been filed."

"Well, if that's the state of affairs, if Sheldon's reduced to mortgaging his property, I guess we can sail in and win."

"There you jump at a very rash conclusion. That mortgage was not made to pay off liabilities incurred. So far as your unions are concerned, it provides Sheldon with a fighting fund of a million dollars in hard cash."

The shot told. Bradshaw's lips parted.

"By God! I didn't think of it in that way."

Wilmington appreciatively puffed his cigar, and coolly contemplated the ascending rings of smoke.

"Do you mean to tell me that this money has been put up?" asked Bradshaw, his eyebrows knitted, his chin thrust forward.

"Every dollar found! Ten days ago one million dollars was passed to the credit of the Sheldon Company at my bank. For that you may take my word or not, just as you please. I am simply giving you fair warning. We capitalists want no labor fights in San Francisco, and an absolutely hopeless one from the start is about the last thing your unions are looking for."

"We want no fighting at all—we only want fair terms," said Bradshaw doggedly. He had laid down his cigar, his arms had dropped by his side, and the fiercely clenched hands revealed the tenseness of his feelings.

"And I for one am perfectly willing you should get your terms," responded the other quickly. "I am no enemy of trades-unionism."

"Are you going in for politics, Mr. Wilmington?" asked the labor leader, with a grimly mocking smile.

"No. I'm after no votes."

"Then how is it you've changed your tune? You are

known as one of our bitterest opponents in the employers' organizations."

"That reputation may not be deserved, my friend. But in any case a man has the right to modify his views in accordance with the progress of the times. I can say to you to-night, frankly and sincerely, that I am in sympathy with the closed shop, the eight-hour day, and recognition of the federated unions."

Bradshaw almost started from his chair; he spoke in sternly repressed excitement:

"And you are a director now and treasurer of the Sheldon company—that I've been told. Does all this mean, then, that Sheldon is going to capitulate?"

"You forget; I said before that I am speaking strictly for myself alone," replied Wilmington.

"Then, while we may have to fight Sheldon, we have not to fight you?"

"My financial interests are identical with Sheldon's. At present we stand or fall together."

The subtle emphasis on two words caught Bradshaw's ear.

"'At present'? What do you mean by that?"

"Sheldon is growing old. He may in course of a little time be eliminated from the control."

Bradshaw raised his still clenched fists to his breast, and gazed eagerly at the banker.

"I begin to understand," he muttered. "You will be in the saddle."

"Most likely. And there is the exact point—when I am in the saddle, I shall be prepared to unionize the establishment."

For a moment the labor leader remained dumb with surprise. Then a shrewd, knowing look stole into his face.

"What is your price for this?"

"Present peace," replied Wilmington quietly. "I want no strike at the works."

"Then when is the closed shop to be declared? Right now?"

"No. You must give me time to accomplish my ends —a year, at least; perhaps a little longer."

"Pshaw! You can't tie our hands like that with vague promises."

"Listen. I said I would play with an open deck of cards. Declare war now against Sheldon, and he'll starve you all into submission in six months—or put it twelve months, if you like; it won't matter to him, with a million of dollars at his back."

"But how will we be better fixed for a fight a year from now?"

"If you wait a year, that million dollars will be tied up in new machinery and materials. The bonds were sold to extend the company's operations. Sheldon is going in for shipbuilding."

"Ho, ho!" The full daylight was now breaking.

"Two or three hundred more men will gradually be put on the pay-roll. The company will be committed by its contracts to further heavy outlays. Now, if you have to fight Sheldon, would you rather do it now, or a year hence? I ask you that as a cold-blooded business proposition."

"And if we go for him and his damned open shop then?"

"Trouble of that kind at that time will mean the whole concern passing into the bondholders' hands. In other words, the Sheldon Manufacturing Company will come under my control. Now do you comprehend?"

Bradshaw gazed at the banker, half in reluctant admiration, half in shrinking repugnance.

"By the Lord, you banking fellows are the slickest schemers on the face of God's earth!"

"One moment, please. When I explain a little more, you will see that my motives are perfectly justified. Have you ever heard of Sheldon's son?"

"Oh, yes. The usual profligate spawn of the millionaire."

"Precisely. Well, if I get hold of the plant, it will save it from being ruined by that spendthrift ne'er-do-well. What would the business be worth after a few years of his ignorant and reckless management? I would bet dollars to doughnuts that half of the present workers, many of them members of your unions, would be out on the streets looking for a job."

Wilmington emptied his tumbler.

"Have some more whisky?" he asked.

"No, thanks." The labor leader's glass was still almost untasted.

"So that's where you would come in," he said, "if we held off a fight for the present?"

"That is where I would come in. I don't pretend to be disinterested. I am wanting to save the company, for the benefit of all concerned, the workmen included."

"Oh, yes, the workmen—of course," muttered Bradshaw bitterly, and with a sardonic smile of incredulity.

He rose from his chair and slowly paced the room, meditating for full a minute. Then he suddenly wheeled round on the banker.

"What guarantee have we," he demanded, "that you will then unionize the plant?"

"I'm quite willing to underwrite my investment," returned Wilmington, with cool aplomb that showed he was expecting the question. "How would ten thousand dollars suit you in return for your pledge that there will be no trouble for at least one year from this date?"

"Remember, I'm no grafter, Mr. Wilmington," exclaimed the labor leader passionately. "If I took that money, it would go into our fighting treasury. And what is to guarantee my word?"

"I know you, Bradshaw. Your public record is good enough for me. I am willing to take your simple pledge —that there will be no strike, and that this whole con-

versation remains confidential as between our two selves."

"I'll have to consult my colleagues They will have to be convinced."

"The arguments I have used to convince you will speedily convince them. They are fighters, but they are also men of common sense. Here is the money. I am quite indifferent as to its ultimate disposal; that's your affair. It is all in greenbacks, issues of a dozen different banks—this for my own protection as well as yours. And, mark you, I am prepared to play the game to the limit. If anyone should say that I passed you this roll to-night, I would deny it point-blank. I would deny it to your own face, Bradshaw, if such a contingency arose."

The banker had got up and unlocked the drawer of a little side-table. He held a bundle of currency in his hand.

"There, now, Mr. Bradshaw. That's in the way of insurance so far as I am concerned, and I pay the amount quite cheerfully. Take it and use it as you like"—with a significant smile.

But the other paid no heed to the subtle hint.

"There is only one use for it," he said determinedly. "The money will help our fight in Los Angeles."

"Well, I've nothing to do with that," replied Wilmington, with studied nonchalance. "You can announce it to your friends as an anonymous contribution to the cause."

The roll was now in the labor leader's hands. He contemplated it for a moment, then thrust it into the hip-pocket of his trousers, a soft pad for the revolver he was carrying. Thereafter, looking Wilmington squarely in the face, he said:

"The point will be settled within twenty-four hours. If there is to be any further move for an immediate strike at the Sheldon works, these greenbacks will be

returned intact. But if you don't hear from me by tomorrow night, you will know that we accept your terms. Here's my hand on that."

The two men clasped hands.

At the same moment the eyes of the Chinaman were withdrawn from an aperture in the wall of an adjacent closet. This closet opened from the hall, and in it overcoats and hats were hung. Its sides were of unpolished redwood, and at the far end what looked like a rather defective horizontal join between two planks was in reality a neatly contrived slit that penetrated both the redwood and the partition beyond. This peephole, commanding a complete view of the room, was unnoticeable on the other side, being recessed in the channeling of an elaborately carved oak dado. Through the thin dividing woodwork conversation was quite audible, except when voices might happen to be lowered.

When the watchful gaze was relinquished, a raincoat, all dusty from disuse, was swung back into place, completely covering the aperture. Then the soft-winged moth fluttered to his own particular nest at the further end of the hall. He had scarcely gained his accustomed chair when the buzzer sounded, summoning him to his master's presence.

"Show this gentleman out by the way you brought him here," directed Wilmington. "Good night, Mr. Bradshaw."

And the labor leader followed the red-knobbed black skull-cap and the dangling glossy pigtail down the dimly lighted service staircase, and as he passed through the door below acknowledged with a grudging nod the silent smile of guileless inanity. The Chinaman nimbly clambered back again to his little room, and, producing a tiny bottle of ink and a fine camel's-hair brush, was busy for a few minutes deftly painting several filigree-like designs compounded of strokes and curves and dots beneath the boldly lettered date on a page of a slim

diary. Then he unrolled his sleeping-mat, arranged his bed on the floor, slipped the diary under his pillow, divested himself of his outer garments, and, still smiling, turned off the light and laid him down to celestial slumber.

CHAPTER XIV

A KNOTTY PROBLEM

Young Sheldon had soon come to understand the arduous nature of the task he had set himself—that to accumulate $100 in savings out of his scanty weekly wage would require infinite patience and rigid self-denial. Until now he had never even faintly realized the magnitude of the sum, which a brief year ago he would have scribbled down on a check without a moment's thought. That simple addition could be such a painfully slow and laborious process came as a reminiscence of kindergarten days when he had struggled with his first lessons in arithmetic. But by adhering to Donald's philosophy of counting the present as the vital moment and allowing the future to take care of itself, he had put out of mind the sum total in the far distance, and could therefore experience keen satisfaction each Saturday afternoon when the little bell of the cash register would tinkle even but once or perhaps a couple of times on occasion.

The first two months had been marked by but tardy progress, for Jimmy had resolutely insisted on a strict reckoning with Donald, and the payments for his working clothes had also to be completed. Thereafter the bell-ringing had been a little more lively. But still, when room and board, laundry, night-school fees, and carfares had been provided for, and a further sum set aside for recreations, such as a football game or a the-

atre or a modest picture show when funds ran low, for newspapers and an occasional magazine, and for a carefully restricted allowance of tobacco, there was but slim provision left for the voracious machine. By Christmas the total marked up in small bright red letters was only $14—the overplus of more than three months' earnings.

After that, however, with debts liquidated and pay increased by his promotion to the molding department, more rapid advancement had been made. By the end of March, $53 had been registered. It was now the month of June, and the figures were at last well up in the eighties. The sound of the bell had come to have for Jimmy a ring of sadness, for it marked the steady and inexorable approach of the day when he must leave the roof-tree and the companionship to which he had become so fondly attached.

For Leslie had now paved the way for his return to San Francisco, and even his father had been so far placated as to write expressing his willingness to accept the self-imposed test in St. Louis as a guarantee of future good conduct, and undertaking to give him a subordinate position in the plant which would enable him further to prove the stability of his good resolutions. This paternal letter had touched Jimmy's pride to the quick, and he might have sent back a swift rejoinder to the effect that he was quite prepared to make his own way in the world. But there were three influences that had stayed his hand.

In the first place, Donald had pointed out that his father's treatment, if cold and stern, was simply what he deserved. Then a letter of thanks to Norah for her share in the Christmas gifts had resulted in a renewal of correspondence, contrite on Jimmy's part, somewhat distant on the girl's side, but causing a yearning in his breast for the sunshine of her presence, for a clasp of her hand, the glint of her laughing blue eyes, her music and singing. But, most of all, Leslie had to be consid-

ered; his brave, good sister, the one who had clung to him through all his perversity, who had shed bitter tears, no doubt, but had never stung him with words of reproach. And Leslie was imploring him to come home, because his father, she said, really needed him, and it would require only a few days of personal contact to make them again the best of friends.

Ping! ping! ping! It was Saturday afternoon.

"What's the total now, son?" cried Donald from the adjoining room.

The doors of both apartments were open, and the young fellows, just returned from work, were changing their clothes.

"That makes ninety-one dollars, old chap. I don't know whether to be miserable or glad. In another two or three weeks I should be hitting the trail for California."

Brodie strolled into the room.

"By the Lord, Jimmy," he said, "how will I ever be able to get on without you?"

"Donald, won't you come with me to San Francisco?"

"Oh, I'd like to in many ways. But of course I've got to stick to my job and to my mother."

"But wouldn't she come too?"

"Break up the old home, uproot all her old associations? I'm afraid that's impossible. Besides, there's the expense to consider. And our newsboys—I don't think we could both leave them. No, no, Jimmy. My place is in St. Louis."

"I wish I could persuade you—I would try to make the change possible, Donald."

"Jobs like mine aren't too easily found, my boy. I can't throw down this one. By the way, did a union delegate tap you on the shoulder this morning?"

"Yes; it seems they are going to fight for a closed shop and the eight-hour day. He told me I would have to join the union or quit."

"What was your answer?"

"I said I'd need a few days to consider the question. I want a good long talk with you, Donald."

"All right. Let's have dinner first. It's raining cats and dogs outside, so we'll spend the afternoon at home."

Mrs. Brodie dearly liked to be present when important matters were under discussion, and her son, knowing this, always tried to humor her. Therefore, at the conclusion of the meal he remarked:

"Mother, Jimmy and I will stay and smoke here, if you don't mind. We're going to have a chat. He's been called upon to join the union."

"I knew it would come," she exclaimed, with promptness and earnestness that showed how deeply she had pondered the subject.

"Of course, this is a matter that won't interest you," continued Donald, with provoking imperturbability. "But we can draw the folding doors, and not disturb your afternoon nap in the parlor."

"Who takes an afternoon nap, I'd like to know?" was Mrs. Brodie's indignant rejoinder. "I haven't come to that yet, Heaven be thanked. We'll all go through to the parlor, and let Frieda clear the table."

She led the way, with her head held high in further protest against the libel of after-dinner drowsiness.

"Now, you may close the doors behind you," she resumed, still with an acidulated accent of offended dignity. "And as for Jimmy and the union, it's perhaps my advice he'll be requiring more than yours, Donald. You were aye headstrong, and have your poor father's obstinacy."

During this rebuke Donald had been arranging her easy-chair, placing a hassock for her feet, and putting her work-basket handy beside her on a little table.

"There now, mother dear"—he was taking amusingly exaggerated pains to pacify her. "Of course we meant

you to be with us; we both want your advice. You never know when I am having a bit of fun with you."

"Well, there's a time for joking and a time for common sense," she said, mollified if not quite appeased, as she plunged a hand among the balls of wool and spools of cotton.

"Now, Jimmy, we can start in," Donald began. "You take the settee and I'll have this rocker. I heard about that delegate being around the shops this morning. He didn't come to me, naturally; for I hold a foreman's job, and besides have my honorable withdrawal card from the Machinists' Union."

"Do you know, Donald, I believe I would have joined the union there and then if he hadn't threatened me?"

"That's the worst of these fellows—many of them seem incapable of understanding that some men, while they may be led, won't be driven."

"Exactly. It rubbed my back the wrong way, old man."

"I don't blame you. What did you say?"

"As I told you before—that I would take a week or two to think it over."

Mrs. Brodie, with a sock on one hand and a darning-needle in the other, looked over the rim of her glasses.

"I'm very glad you took that stand," she commented approvingly. "'Ca' canny' is a braw Scottish maxim."

"And what then?" asked Donald.

He wished to draw Jimmy out. His mother had long since privately urged that it would be highly improper to influence the young fellow too strongly in a matter that might so seriously affect his future relations with his father. Therefore, up to the present this subject of trades-unionism had been rather avoided in their evening conversations, although Jimmy had heard plenty about it during the dinner-hour discussions among the workmen at the plant.

"Oh, I don't know—I was quite honest in saying I

required a little time to think. After working nine months in the factory among all those decent chaps, I see things quite differently. In fact, I used to be an enemy of trades-unionism without knowing anything about the issues involved."

"That is true in so many cases," commented Donald. "On both sides it is the narrow environment that breeds the bitterest partisans."

"I just accepted my father's views, and now I realize that a whole lot of his arguments can be bowled over like ninepins. For instance, any refusal to meet the chosen representatives of organized labor is rank injustice—the individual laborer can only be adequately protected by association with his fellows, and therefore it is associated labor that must present his grievances and defend his rights."

"You've hit the nail square on the head," exclaimed Brodie enthusiastically. And as he gazed at the fine earnest countenance before him, for a moment there flashed back to memory the contrasted picture in the ice-cream parlor—the weak, vacuous smile, the reiterated invitation, "Have a Sco'ch highball, ol' sport."

"Then I can't but recognize," continued Jimmy, "that the nation has educated its working classes to know and appreciate the best things in life. Their very education makes them crave for a fair share, not only of the necessaries that keep body and soul together, but of the things as well that make life happy and enjoyable."

Mrs. Brodie had ceased from her darning. Caution prompted her to contradiction, but, search as she might, she could as yet find no word with which to interfere. She just watched and listened.

A broad smile had come over Donald's face. "The toilers have come to want the flavors of existence," he remarked; "the shake of pepper in the soup, the dash of vinegar over the beans, a bit of cheese with the apple-pie."

"Well, that's a practical way of putting it," laughed Jimmy. "The good things, even the luxuries, have got to be passed round. Then, haven't I myself come to long for the eight-hour day? Take our own case, Mrs. Brodie. Donald and I are on the move or hard at it from half-past five in the morning; not a moment of leisure till supper's over after seven o'clock. We are young, and although we may feel tired, we manage to get some reading and relaxation. But what real chance does a ten-hour day give the average working man, the man with a family—where does he get time to attend to his family affairs, time really to enjoy family life, time to recuperate, study and reflect, time to lend a hand for his own advancement and that of his fellow-workers?"

"Great guns, Jimmy," said Donald, "you've got to the real marrow of the question! Now don't you admire the unions for what they have accomplished under such a handicap? Think of all they have already done to make the lives of the workers at least a little more livable, and this during the scanty hours after days of overwork and with the scanty funds spared from insufficient wages."

"But wages are growing steadily better," discreetly interposed Mrs. Brodie. "And the eight-hour day is gradually becoming universal."

"Yes," flashed Donald, "but it is the unions that have achieved both results—without the strength of brotherhood, without our all getting together, no such concessions would have been gained."

"That's just how I feel," concurred Jimmy. "And the argument carries me further still. In the brotherhood of labor, should not every man be a unionist? If the unionists are a majority in any trade, have they not the right to make their will felt over all their fellows? Each man has an individual interest in their associated toil, but if he is to work in harmonious association he

must be prepared to sink his full individual liberty. That, or he must go it alone."

"Which he can't do under modern conditions of combined labor," interrupted Donald, "with the big factories taking the place of the small workshop, and costly machine tools supplanting the hammer or the spade which the old-time worker used. And don't the capitalists act on the very same rule?" he proceeded, warming to his subject. "What is a corporation but a combination of individual financial resources with a view to more effective and more economical results? It is simply the financial machine tool, the financial Nasmyth hammer, getting to work instead of the tiny individual tack-hammer. And in the corporation it is the majority that elects its board of directors to carry on the enterprise. If the individual investor has any kick against this method of running things, his only alternative is to keep out of the combination and, as you say, Jimmy, go it alone. It all comes round to our many talks about evolution."

"That, for the advancement of the aggregate, individualism must become submerged," assented Sheldon.

"Precisely. And both unions of capital and unions of labor are the cementing of identical interests—the first bonds of brotherhood which must eventually lead to the fusion of capital and labor themselves when men come to realize that these interests are also identical. Union, union, union, gradually mounting up all the time, until we reach to the universal brotherhood of man, which is the unerring and ultimate evolution of civilization."

Jimmy remained silent; he was gazing at his friend's impassioned face.

"And the very foundation stone of union in every shape and form is majority rule," continued Donald. "Take our own national government, for instance. We are proud to call it *'The Union'*—our fathers fought

and died for the Union, for the Union flag. But what is national government, what is the Union, but majority rule, pure and simple? Without frank submission to this principle, there could be no government at all—there would be nothing but faction fighting and anarchy. It all points to the eternal law of progress, Jimmy, that the majority must rule."

The direct appeal roused the other from his rapt attitude.

"Yes," he responded, "and coming back to my own particular case, that is the reason I ask myself why, in the factory, if nearly all the other fellows are unionists, should I be so self-centered and obstinate as to stand aloof—to refuse the majority rule."

"There's the whole argument for the closed shop in a nutshell," said Donald emphatically.

"Yes, that's all very well, but there are arguments on the other side," objected Mrs. Brodie. "Every man has the right to work whether he be a unionist or not."

Donald was too carried away to observe the note of warning in her tone; he took up the challenge at once.

"But the right to work, mother, does not necessarily mean the right to be employed. If that were so, every employer would be compelled to take the first man and every man that came along. That's impossible! The right to work is not denied to a man asking for work if he is told by the employer that there happens to be no place for him in that particular factory. How, then, is the right denied if the non-unionist is told that he is not an acceptable associate among unionized workers? In both cases he has simply got to move along."

"But that is just driving all the men by force into the unions," contended Mrs. Brodie.

"No doubt. But in the modern industrial world only associated labor, the labor of hundreds of coöperating hands, is possible, and, as we've just been arguing, harmonious associated labor is possible only under major-

ity rule. The man who is going to hold out for individual rights in the labor world to-day is going to have as bad a time as the man who claims individual rights as against the laws of the land, which are merely the laws imposed by the good sense and honest principles of the majority of the nation."

"But look at the mistakes the unions make," persisted Mrs. Brodie. "Their laws may not be always the best laws."

"Undoubtedly," assented Donald. "Man is fallible, and therefore any association of men must also be fallible. Passion and want of full knowledge will lead associations astray as they lead individuals astray. Even the laws of the land are not necessarily the best laws; many laws that once seemed just and right have had to be repealed owing to the advancement of public sentiment. But we submit to the laws as good citizens, even though we may criticize and want to amend, and do in time amend, some of them. That's why, in my opinion, it behooves the most conservative working men to get into the unions and make their influence felt there, instead of depriving themselves of any voice in labor affairs by staying on the outside."

"So you would have all men unionists?" remarked Jimmy.

"It will be best for capital as well as for labor when this result is attained—at least, that's my way of thinking. Universal unionism would sweep away the bitter controversy that has been waged, and will always be waged, over the open shop. But remember this: if we are to have the closed shops we must have the open unions. There are extremists in the labor ranks to-day who would selfishly restrict the number of men in the unions, who even claim the right to choose and pick the apprentices that are to learn a trade. These men have to be fought tooth and nail by union labor itself, for to pull down one form of tyranny and set up in its

place an equally odious form of tyranny would not be progress. To my mind, such personal discrimination is contrary to the whole spirit of trades-unionism, which is that every man willing to do his share of the world's work shall receive the outstretched brotherly hand—the square deal."

"Then your whole argument goes to show that I should join the union?" said Jimmy.

"You have got to think of your father," bravely interposed Mrs. Brodie, seizing the opening that had at last offered. "There is a duty to him, and don't you forget it, my laddie."

Young Sheldon still looked at Donald—he was awaiting his reply. It came after a moment of deliberation.

"Mother is perfectly correct. In a fight for principles there are questions of policy to be considered as well. Jimmy, your heart is in the right place; you are thinking along right lines. But you belong to the capitalist class; your future lies there."

"That depends on my father," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"Oh, don't you worry about that," observed Mrs. Brodie. "Though he mayn't say much, he's waiting for you with open arms. He's only got to see you now to know that you'll be a credit to his name—that you'll some day carry on the Sheldon business, perhaps even better than he has done."

"No, no," disclaimed the young fellow, shaking his head. "I can never be so grand a man as my brave old dad."

"That speaks well for your modesty," she responded. "But you will one day be the head of the firm, for all that."

Donald took up the thread again:

"And that is why I say, don't join the union, Jimmy. I would rather send one man holding your opinions in among the employers than gain a thousand new members

for the unions. It is when capital and labor get together with such thoughts that they will pull together for the redress of all wrongs."

"That's what ought to be," sententiously remarked Mrs. Brodie.

"The extremists on both sides," continued Donald, "have got to modify their views and come together on the middle ground."

"My father among the rest," commented Jimmy gravely.

"Oh, I'm not talking against your father. It's the other way about, in fact. I recognize that in this long and bitter fight between capital and labor, the extremists have hitherto played a necessary part on both sides. It is only by excessive demands on the side of labor that anything substantial has been won, and it is equally true that only by dogged resistance on the other side has the controversy been kept within bounds of safety and reason."

Jimmy's face expressed surprise that arguments in his father's defense should be forthcoming from Donald.

"Yet all your sympathies are with the laboring classes," he remarked.

"Sure. But there are always arguments on both sides. At present the struggle is like a grim tug-of-war, and safety lies in not letting the white bit of rag on the rope move in either direction too swiftly or too far. For if the one team is to be suddenly yanked off its feet, there is danger of the other team tumbling over itself in confusion, with broken arms and broken heads. That is what every prudent man wants to avoid. Anarchy and slavery are alike deplorable. It is on the middle ground that the salvation of the whole country lies."

"Then is the grim tug-of-war to go on eternally?"

"God forbid! Both sides have to be brought to see the foolishness of the game—to recognize that there is no

real antagonism between the teams, that capital and labor have the common object of producing wealth for the general happiness of mankind. When that is understood, then they can hitch the old tug-of-war rope to wagonload after wagonload of human misery, and in course of time, by their united efforts, dump poverty and hunger, ignorance and suffering, into the bottomless depths of the ocean."

"But how are we going to get those fighters to let go the rope now? Take my father, for example. The struggle has become a positive passion with him. He would count it cowardice to quit."

"I can know that he is brave," responded Donald. "I can admire his bravery. But it is sometimes the bravest act of all, the act of a hero, to run away."

"To quit?"

"Yes, to quit, Jimmy; to quit just so soon as you know you're playing the wrong game. The real coward may be the man who won't quit—the man whose personal pride and obstinacy won't allow him to yield even though he has become convinced that he is in the wrong."

"But if he doesn't know that he is in the wrong?"

"Then we've got to show him, Jimmy—prove it to his own conscience. Nothing is gained by telling a man that we think him in the wrong. He himself has got to know it. Then if he does not become a quitter, he is a moral coward. And sooner or later the inevitable end for every coward is defeat."

Jimmy slowly nodded his head two or three times; he was communing with himself on the difficulties that lay before him.

"So that's the task I've got to tackle?" he said. "Before we had this talk to-day, Donald, I really meant to join the union, even though by doing so I knew my father would disown me forever. I felt it was the only thing to do, because it was the right thing to do."

Donald smiled his commendation.

"But your duty is as clear as day, sonnie," he said.

"To stand by his father," broke in Mrs. Brodie approvingly.

"Yes," concurred Donald, "and bring his father to the middle ground—convince him that his prejudices against organized labor are wrong—that he has got to cease his present fight or be prepared in the long run to be rolled aside."

"When you put me up against that proposition," said Jimmy, "you certainly count me pretty courageous. You don't know the old man," he added, with a rueful smile.

CHAPTER XV

REUNION

Jimmy had been for some time expecting the news; his sister's letters had prepared him for it. So he was not surprised when on the following Monday evening, returning from work, he found a telegram awaiting him on the hall table. He ripped open the envelope and read.

> "We leave to-morrow evening by Golden State Limited. Will stop off Saturday and Sunday in St. Louis. Don't trouble to meet train. Our hotel will be the Washington. LESLIE."

"That's great," said Jimmy to himself. "Fits in splendidly. I'll be free on Saturday to show Leslie around. Dear old girl!"

Next day he secured a railway folder, and, finding that Tuesday's Golden State Limited from San Francisco was due to arrive in St. Louis on Saturday morning at 7:55, decided to quit work at the factory on Thursday night.

"That will make four and a half days on my time card, so I'll have enough pay coming to reach the sum-total on the cash register. The hundred dollars will just about square everything here, and pay transporta-

tion and sleepers to California—I don't mind going tourist car instead of standard if I have to cut things fine. Friday I'll have a look through my trunks in storage, and spruce myself up a bit for Leslie."

On Saturday morning Jimmy, despite the injunction to the contrary, was at the Union Depot. The long train of Pullman cars rolled in on time. Leslie threw herself into her brother's arms, the joy of her heart shining through a mist of tears like sunshine through a springtime shower of rain. Mr. Sheldon shook hands cordially; his face wore a smile that was pleased although grimly amused as well.

"You're looking fit, Jimmy," he remarked. "Work seems to have agreed with you. You must have put on twenty pounds since I saw you last."

"Oh, but I'm as hard as nails," he replied, as he disengaged the traveling bag from his father's hands.

"Don't let that get away from you," cautioned Mr. Sheldon. "It's full of important papers. But I thought you worked on Saturday up to noon?"

"I quit last Thursday night, dad."

"Oh!"—with just a slight arching of the eyebrows.

"You see, I have completed the hundred dollars I started out to save. Then a certain complication arose."

"Cold feet?"

"No; but I had either to throw up my job or join the union."

The father's eyes flashed with approbation.

"So you walked out? Good for you, my boy!"

Jimmy felt a trifle guilty when, as they moved toward the exit of the station, a kindly arm was passed across his shoulders. His motives were misunderstood; he was being commended for harboring feelings which his better judgment had now disowned. However, this was neither the time nor the place for explanations. Moreover, he had promised Mrs. Brodie to rush into no headstrong dispute. Just as he himself had resented being

dragooned into the union, so must cautious persuasion be employed in his father's case if there was to be any modification effected in the ironmaster's stern and uncompromising hostility toward organized labor.

And here, too, was Leslie plucking at his disengaged arm. Of course, she knew from his letters his changed views toward trades-unionism, and in intervening she showed both her sympathy and her quick woman's wit.

"Oh, we're on holiday just now," she laughingly protested, "and no one is going to speak a word about labor unions or labor disputes. Remember your promise, daddy. The subject is taboo. That's meant for you, too, Jimmy. Do you hear?"

Jimmy heard, and Jimmy understood. He shot at her a glance of affectionate gratitude.

"My word, you are looking pretty, Leslie!" he said, in an undertone.

"Compliments also are taboo," she replied, with a gratified blush all the same. "If you don't accept this ruling, I'll be telling you that you look ever so much manlier since you've grown a mustache."

Jimmy passed a hand over the new facial adornment.

"Oh, I grew that to save time in shaving. Shall I get it off now?"

"That will be for somebody else to decide," murmured Leslie, with a meaning squeeze of his arm.

They were standing by the hotel omnibus into which the travelers' grips had been bestowed. Mr. Sheldon was signaling for a taxicab.

"Oh, by the way, how's Norah?" asked Jimmy, with assumed nonchalance.

"Fine and dandy," responded Leslie. "Given up roaming the woods and climbing the high Sierras now she knows that you're to be at home."

"Come along, little girl," interposed her father. "Jump in, Jimmy. You'll breakfast with us."

It was a happy morning for all of them. They hired an automobile, drove leisurely amidst the beauties of Forest Park, and then had a run downtown along the principal streets, this being the limit of Leslie's sightseeing desires. They got back to their fashionable uptown hotel about two o'clock for luncheon. During the drive Leslie and Jimmy had chatted on all manner of interesting home topics, while his father had told him a good deal about the plant and about his shipbuilding plans. He was on his way now to visit the big shipyards at Philadelphia, Camden and Newport News, so that he might inspect the latest equipment in actual operation before placing orders for machinery.

"As you are foot-loose," he had said, "I think you should come along, Jimmy. You will have the chance to pick up some ideas."

The prospect was a pleasing one, but more pleasing still was the unexpectedness of such an invitation when he had been looking rather for a series of stern and disciplinary lectures.

After lunch Mr. Sheldon had another suggestion to make.

"Take the machine, Jimmy, and run down and bring your friend Brodie here; I want to have a talk with him."

"And he is looking forward to meeting you," responded Jimmy, with alacrity and displaying an eagerness on Donald's behalf which the facts scarcely justified. "You'll like him, Leslie. He's a man."

Into the word "man" there went an emphasis that carried more meaning than a dozen superlatives.

Donald came, and by his quiet, modest, resolute demeanor conquered. Mr. Sheldon surveyed the tall, square-set, stalwart young man with the appreciation which the engineer instinctively awards to physical strength. Then, though there lurked a half-shy smile

upon the lips, there was yet greater strength revealed in the eyes, in the jaw, in the very poise of the head, serenely but unconsciously self-confident.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Brodie," said Mr. Sheldon, with a cordial handgrip.

"Thank you, sir. I'm pleased indeed to meet Jimmy's father."

"Let me present you to my daughter. Leslie, dear, this is Mr. Brodie."

Their eyes met; in Leslie's there was a soft glow such as Donald Brodie had never seen in woman's eyes before.

"How can we ever thank you?" she murmured; and the clasp of her little hand sent a thrill through Donald's frame. In the intensity of her repressed emotion she retained his hand.

"Oh, we're going to forget all about that, Miss Sheldon," he replied. "I am deeply attached to your brother. We have come to be like Pylades and Orestes —inseparable chums."

She had released his hand now, with a final grateful pressure.

"What was your college, Brodie?" inquired Mr. Sheldon, who had overheard the classical allusion with no small surprise. "I myself am a Lehigh man."

"I didn't go to college, sir. After high school, I went through a regular apprenticeship as a mechanical engineer. But I have studied nearly all my life in my leisure hours, both at home and in evening classes. My father taught me that habit when I was a child. He was a university graduate from Scotland," he added, with some little pride in his smile.

"A good school," concurred Mr. Sheldon.

For an hour or so they all chatted on various themes. Embarrassing references as to how Jimmy had come into Donald's life were by tacit assent avoided. But Brodie drew some amusing pictures of the early days at the

pug-mill and of Jimmy's first speech at the newsboys' club. In the young foreman's case, Leslie's taboo about labor topics had not to be enjoined; he showed no disposition to introduce the one theme that might have proved troublous.

Mr. Sheldon had relaxed; he had laughed heartily—at times had indulged in a few quizzical remarks at the expense of the reformed scapegrace of the family. Jimmy and Leslie had been as happy as children in their renewed companionship.

At last Donald rose to bring his call to a termination.

"I guess I've stayed too long," he said diffidently.

"By no means," replied Mr. Sheldon. "Please be seated again for a few minutes. You and I have not yet got down to brass tacks. How would a machinist's job suit you in my works at San Francisco?"

Surprise held Donald silent. The other misinterpreted his hesitation.

"Oh, it will lead to something better, don't be afraid," he went on. "I do not see why a master-mechanic like you should not rapidly qualify as foreman in one of the shops, or even for some higher executive appointment."

"A foreman's place in such a big plant as yours would be a great responsibility—a greater responsibility than I have ever had before."

"But you are not the man to shirk responsibility, Mr. Brodie," remarked Leslie. "Responsibility is one of the greatest prizes in life. There has to be considered not only the good that may be accomplished, but also the splendid discipline to the man himself who exercises it."

The oracular utterance tripped smoothly from the young girl's tongue. Brodie looked at her in dumb amazement. He seemed to be listening to the echo of words which he himself had on some previous occasion used. But in the demure glint of her eyes he found no solution of the mystery, and Jimmy was behind his back,

discreetly invisible, so he failed to catch the grin on the face of the industrious midnight compiler of "The Philosophy of Donald Brodie."

"I know it, Miss Sheldon," he falteringly replied. Then he turned again to her father.

"For myself, I should like very much to go to San Francisco. But I must consult my mother. I'm afraid it would be pretty hard for her to part from all her old possessions—from all her kind friends and neighbors."

"That is easily arranged. You can send your belongings over in a railroad car. I shall be pleased to take care of that expense."

"And in California," urged Leslie, as if in guileless innocence despite her mischievously merry look, "your mother will find her neighbors just the same as in St. Louis—just as good and kind."

Donald held his breath; he had never before met a new acquaintance holding sentiments so closely in harmony with his own. As for Jimmy, he had retreated to a window, his handkerchief stuffed into his mouth in a desperate effort to restrain himself from laughing aloud.

"Well, give the matter a night's thought, Brodie," said Mr. Sheldon, rising to terminate the interview. "Our compliments to your mother, and say that if quite convenient we will call on her to-morrow afternoon. Good-by for the present. You'll stay to dinner, Jimmy?"

"Not to-night, dad. If you don't mind, I'm going to be present at the Brodie family council. You and I will have lots of dinners together, for I'm going to pack my grip for Philadelphia."

"Just as you say, my boy. Then Leslie and I will take in a theater."

Donald was now bidding her good-by.

"You will come to California," she murmured, again prolonging her hold upon his hand. "For my brother's

sake, you'll come," she whispered, just above her breath, so that none but he could hear.

"I should be glad to be where Jimmy is," he answered. "Good day, Miss Sheldon." And then he turned away, strangely moved and bewildered.

"So they are to pay me a visit to-morrow afternoon, are they?" remarked Mrs. Brodie, with great complacency. "I'll have to get out my poplin. It's a dress I've had, Jimmy," she went on to explain, "since I was married. And it's as good as new, even though it may be a trifle out of fashion. I wear it only on state occasions. Donald keeps it packed away for me in a moth-proof chest of cedar wood, all nicely wrapped in tissue paper and with sprays of sweet lavender."

"*I* keep it!" cried Donald. "Well, I like that, mother."

"Oh, he's more concerned about my appearance than I am mysel', Jimmy," she continued, with undisturbed equanimity. "And we'll have out the silver teapot, too. I think I'll get you to polish it, Donald, with my big chamois leather. As like as not, Frieda would scratch it badly. She's never to be trusted with anything particular."

"And what about the California project, Mrs. Brodie?" asked Jimmy.

"I'll decide about that to-morrow," she replied, "after I've run the footrule over your father."

Jimmy smiled.

"Good old Scottish caution, Mrs. Brodie. Ca' canny, eh?"

"Well, it's better to be slow than sorry, my mannie," she briskly retorted.

The Sunday afternoon tea was a great success. In all the glory of her pearl-gray poplin, and with her crown of beautiful white hair, Mrs. Brodie looked the

picture of some ancient dame of high degree taken from an old colored print or a bit of Sèvres porcelain. Her garments exhaled the fragrance of sweet lavender. Over her shoulders was a fichu of old point lace, caught together at the throat by the gold pin with the inset cairngorm that had been her Christmas gift from San Francisco.

She had taken to Leslie instantly, for the girl had drawn her into a corner, put her arms around her neck, and kissed her with the whispered words: "Oh, I just love you already for all you've done! You have been a real mother to our Jimmy. And you *will* come to California, won't you?"

Mrs. Brodie had almost blurted out "Yes" before she remembered that the footrule had still to be applied to Mr. Sheldon.

He was affability itself, took a second cup of tea, and bestowed an unmistakable look of respect on the massive antique piece of silver from which it was dispensed, and, most surprising thing of all in an American, professed to like the decoction good and strong with rich cream to give perfection to generous body and fragrant bouquet.

"I've no patience with those buddies," commented Mrs. Brodie, when discreetly satisfied on this point, "who put two tea leaves and a slice of lemon in a cup of hot water and make-believe that they're enjoying it. A real cup of tea is a great stand-by, Mr. Sheldon, when you're tired or your nerves need steadying."

"Decidedly," acquiesced Mr. Sheldon cheerfully, although at least the latter part of the doctrine was rank heresy according to the popular belief to which he had been trained.

"It's tea that to-day makes the United States of America, mother," remarked Donald, with great gravity.

"Yes, I'm glad to find that they're taking to it more

kindly now than formerly," she condescendingly answered.

"Oh, I was referring to the Boston Tea Party," grinned young Columbia.

"I'll pay you out for that, my laddie," exclaimed Mrs. Brodie tartly amidst the general laughter. "What do you think of a son who would affront his old mother, and before company, too?" she asked of Leslie, with a twinkle in her eye. "Just you come upstairs, my dear, and Mr. Sheldon, too, if he pleases. I want to show you Jimmy's room, all spick and span and kept in good order as contrasted with Donald's. He's got his Encyclopedia Britannica fairly littered about the place."

"Now, mother," protested Donald, looking red and uncomfortable. "You know that's a libel. Miss Sheldon, how can I ever thank you for such a Christmas present?"

"Well, I'm going up to see how you use it," she replied, with a saucy nod of her head.

"Donald and Jimmy will remain down here," announced Mrs. Brodie decisively. And the young men, faintly smiling, hastily resumed their chairs.

If Jimmy had been upstairs, he would have divined the delicate intention of that visit of inspection. Mr. Sheldon glanced at his son's room; he noted the books on engineering, and a set of drawing instruments on a side table. Leslie was looking at her own picture and that of Norah, side by side on a chiffonier. But Mrs. Brodie had touched Mr. Sheldon's coat sleeve, and directed his attention to the photograph of himself hung upon the wall beside the bed.

"He has had it there all the time," she said, in an undertone. "The laddie has such an admiration for you. His 'dear, brave old father'—that's Jimmy, never tired of speaking about you."

The ironmaster turned and gazed out of the window. Mrs. Brodie left him for Leslie's side.

"Twa fine bonnie lassies," she said, glancing at the twin pictures on the chiffonier. "They've been a real comfort to Jimmy—a real touch of home. And now we'll all be going downstairs again, my dear."

"Not till I have seen the much-abused encyclopedia," laughed Leslie.

"Come away ben then."

And together, with Mr. Sheldon following to the doorway, they surveyed Donald's room, with its long rows of bookshelves, one in particular showing an imposing array of volumes in handsome calfskin bindings.

"These were his father's college prizes," explained Mrs. Brodie, in answer to a look of inquiry.

On the center table were pencils, notebooks, and other studious equipment, also a single volume of the encyclopedia, open at a certain page with a paper-weight to keep the place. The other volumes of the set were in their proper book-rack near at hand.

"I agree with your son, Mrs. Brodie," smiled Leslie, raising a reproving finger. "A libel—a palpable libel!"

"Well, it was my turn to poke a wee bit fun at him," she replied jauntily. The approval of Donald's den manifested on both the visitors' faces had given her a sense of complete motherly satisfaction.

The automobile had rolled away. Jimmy accompanied his father and sister, for there was a dinner party with an old friend resident in St. Louis to which the whole family had been invited. The promise had been given that Donald would take up the position offered to him in the Sheldon ironworks. Jimmy had shouted "Hurrah!" Leslie's countenance had beamed with delight; even Mr. Sheldon had looked gratified.

Donald and his mother were now chatting by themselves.

"A fine gentleman," she remarked, "and pleasant spoken, too, when he likes. But losh! doesn't he look stern."

"Fighting has made him stern, mother. But he's all right. See how his daughter loves him."

"Oh, she's a dear! But if fighting makes men look like that, it's the Universal Brotherhood of Peace I'm going to join."

"Sisterhood," suggested Donald slyly.

"My old minister in Scotland used to tell us that the brothers embrace the sisters."

"Not to-day, mother. Times are changed. The suffragettes declare that the sisters no longer want to be embraced."

"Stuff and nonsense! Just give a proper lassie the choice between a vote and a sweetheart, and you'll see which she jumps at. What need a woman want for more than her home? It's a good old saying, Donald—the hand that rocks the cradle rocks the world."

"But there are no more cradles now, mother. They too have been voted out-of-date and positively harmful."

Mrs. Brodie sniffed contemptuously.

"Well, you were rocked in a cradle, and I'll challenge anyone to show me a finer specimen of a man. But cradles or no cradles, there have got to be babies. And, to my way o' thinking, a woman can't do politics and mend the bairns' clothes at the same time."

"You're a rare old conservative, mother."

"Mebbe. But I hope I'll no see you taking up with any of the bold banner-waving hussies. A sweet, domesticated lassie will be good enough for me."

"And where do I come in?" laughed Donald.

"Oh, in such a matter you'll take your mother's advice, I'm thinking."

"Ha, ha, old lady; you don't need the vote! You've

got all the power already. Mothers or wives—they rule the world to-day."

"And it's a very excellent thing for the men that they do," she replied complacently.

CHAPTER XVI

HEART CONFIDENCES

It was Sunday once again, and the evening shadows were falling. Mrs. Brodie and Donald were seated on the flower-embowered porch of their home. They were alone—they felt very much alone; for Jimmy was gone, leaving a void in their hearts and imparting a touch of desolateness to the familiar objects around.

They had departed from their usual routine by attending church in the morning and omitting the evensong. In their present mood every little change was a distraction and therefore comforting. And over them brooded the sense of further impending changes that meant the severing of old ties, the forming of new ones —the closing of an old familiar book, the opening of a new volume containing the mysteries of unknown events to come.

They had talked over the things that had to be done. Donald was to leave the terra-cotta plant at the end of the week, so that he might devote himself to the packing of the furniture and other family belongings. The subletting of the house had already been placed in an agent's hands. The box-car from the railroad had been requisitioned. Arrangements had been made for continuing the good work at the newsboys' coffee club. Frieda had received her due notice, and had announced

the intention of taking a month's holiday before deciding on another place from among the many already clamoring for her selection. The fire-insurance policy had been terminated a fortnight from date; the life-insurance company had been notified of their future address. All the things of major importance seemed to have received attention.

The conversation of mother and son now inclined to reminiscence that carried them back to the old days on the farm before the death of Donald's father, before the change from country life to city life made by the widow mainly with a view to her boy's education and advancement.

"In your father, Donald," mused Mrs. Brodie, "you had the best of teachers, for he was a thorough man. And though only a farmer, he was a scholar, recollect; the last book he ever read was Plato's Republic in the original Greek—you've got the very volume upstairs."

"I've often looked at it and wished I could do more than merely spell out a few occasional words."

"Oh, well, you've learned other things as important as Greek, doubtless. But it was the classics that made your father a thorough man and an exact man. Don't you remember him often telling you that in school or college the main thing is to learn how to learn—that the facts you acquire are of less importance than the training of your mind?"

"I remember, mother. He used to say—'While you are young, my laddie, don't trouble sawing wood, but sharpen the saw.'"

"Aye, he had always a terse, forcible way o' putting things. And you were a real smart pupil, Donald. It was remarkable how your father brought you along. You had read the first three books of Virgil, knew your Greek alphabet, could repeat every proposition in Euclid, the sixth book included, and could work sums in algebra up to simple equations—all this before you were

thirteen years of age, just think of that! It was simply marvelous."

"Yes," nodded Donald, "as regards my poor father, I should say it was marvelous. He was the most patient and unselfish man that ever lived, to give me all that care and attention amidst his heavy work on the farm."

"Oh, between crops and during the long winter nights it kept him from wearying. For your father loved to teach as well as to learn. Look what I myself gained from him. Not but that I had had a good schooling, too—nobody, lass or lad, ever left Scotland without that, Donald. But to listen to him reading or talking was to keep on learning new things all the time. It was a sad loss to you, laddie, when you lost your father's teaching."

"I can know that, mother. But consider what you did for me after he was gone. You kept on studying with me. I remember fine," he continued, with a smile, "how you started in to learn conic sections so that vou might carry me on in my mathematics."

"But I soon gave that up," laughed Mrs. Brodie. "A circle I could understand. But the parabola got me fairly mazed. You had left me far behind in many things besides mathematics, Donald, when you graduated from the high school. But it's to college you should have gone—I've never yet been reconciled to your missing that."

"Oh, shucks, mother! A fellow can go out into the world of work and never cease learning. Here is another thing father used to say: 'Once you've learned how to learn, everything around you can become your books of study—men and women, cities and fields, rocks and trees, clouds, and even your own thoughts.' You bet I learned more in the machine-shops than I would have ever picked up at college."

"I'll allow the part-truth in what you say, if the col-

lege had been one of those new-fangled co-education establishments."

Donald smiled. "You dear old Tory," he said. "Or perhaps reactionary is the down-to-date name I should call you."

"Well, Tory or reactionary, I've no patience in throwing young men and young women constantly together at a time they are better kept apart. It destroys man's reverence for woman in the first place."

"Perhaps that's no great disadvantage—a more commonsense relationship may be better."

But she paid no heed to the interruption.

"And in the second place a young man can't be thinking of a girl all day long and devoting proper attention to his books at the same time."

"But the girl herself may be a book well worth studying," chuckled Donald. "'Woman the Eternal Mystery'—that might be the title page."

"Yes, but she should be placed on the Index Expurgatorius until the boy has come to the age of discretion when he can read such literature without danger to himself. No, no, Donald, you can't convince me that co-education is the wise thing. Give me the old Scottish universities where a student would go through the winter session on a barrel of oatmeal, a keg o' salt herrings, and never a word to a woman but his landlady."

Donald laughed aloud. "But that's going back to ancient days, mother."

"Your father's days," she insisted.

"Oh, they don't keep to the oatmeal and herring diet now, I can assure you. Besides, they have got co-education in Scotland—they've advanced with the times."

"Then it's small respect I have for the times," retorted Mrs. Brodie, at the end of her argument, but with drums still beating and banners still flying.

She arose and examined the mold in one of her pots

of geraniums—a change of subject was necessary to cover her retreat.

"These plants need watering," she remarked drily.

"Bother the plants! Sit down again, mother. It's a lovely evening."

"What were we talking about? Oh, yes, your poor father." She resumed her seat and placidly continued: "Well, my son, when we lost him we lost a good man. And for the first year I could do nothing but cry my eyes out, and wish him back again. Then a great change came over me. I rejoiced that he was dead."

"Mother!" The tone of his voice bespoke shocked surprise.

"I rejoiced for his sake, Donald. He had fought his good fight and won, for he left behind him the richest legacy of all—the loving memory of kind and gentle deeds. Whiles you may have thought your father strict and stern, laddie, for he was one of the hard Presbyterian sort who never betray their softer feelings. But I knew him better. I knew the goodness of his heart, the many kind and helpful things he did unbeknown to anyone around. And that's what I mean by the richest legacy; it is just such deeds that can be counted as victory in a man's life, for they prompt to good and generous deeds in others, and so go on perpetuating themselves eternally."

"Now I understand what you meant," he murmured. "Father had earned his reward."

Softly and slowly she spoke the lines:

"Kind hearts are the garden,
Kind thoughts are the roots,
Kind words are the blossoms,
Kind deeds are the fruits."

"You know I was aye fond of wee bit snatches of poetry, Donald," she added apologetically.

"Those four lines are a whole sermon, mother," he said thoughtfully.

"Well, as I was remarking," she resumed, in sprightlier tone, "your father fought and won, and deserved the peace he had gained; therefore, it was wrong for me to wish him back again in the troubled world. Grief for the dead is just pure selfishness, Donald. We merely grieve for ourselves in the loneliness of our bereavement. So over me at last stole the sense of quiet peaceful happiness in knowing that he had crossed to the other shore. Then later came further happiness—the thought that beyond the valley of death we have our dear departed ones waiting for us with joyful faces, eager to stretch forth the helping hand as we come struggling up through the last mists of this life's doubts and fears into the sunlit gardens of heaven and eternity. So you see, Donald, it is fine to have our dead—they can be a joy and a comfort and an abiding happiness to those who are waiting to follow them."

While Donald had been listening with profound attention, a vague feeling took possession of him—the feeling of how much he owed to his mother, of how much his own thoughts had sprung from her mentality, just as his body had sprung from her physical being.

"Mother-love is just man's first glimpse of God-love," he said tenderly.

"What do you mean by that?" She had not divined the train of reflection that had prompted the remark.

"Often when you are talking to me, mother dear, the thought that God-love and mother-love must be the same comes to my mind. Before the child is born, think what it owes to its mother—warmth, nourishment, protection under her very heart. It is enwrapped around by the protecting deity, its mother. And only after it is born does it see this all-guarding God face to face—does it realize that in the preceding existence it had

lived in the very bosom of this God. It makes me think of God the mother, rather than God the father."

"Yes, He is all around us, Donald."

"The immanent God. So by honoring and loving his mother a man can learn to love and honor God."

In the gathering darkness he rose and kissed her brow. She pressed him fondly to her bosom, deeply moved.

"Then a mother's love for her son," she murmured, "may be like the love of God for all men. It's a solemn thought, Donald."

For a minute they remained silent. At last he resumed his seat, drawing it a little closer to her side.

"You are really glad to go to California?" he asked.

"It's realizing my heart's desire," she answered. "I never mentioned it because I did not wish to unsettle you, Donald. But ever since you told me about Riverside I have longed to hear the old mission bells. And I have longed to shake your friend Mr. Dana by the hand. It was too bad he couldn't pay his promised visit in the fall. A letter was but a poor way for me to thank him. I want to visit Bethlehem. I want to hear him preach a sermon. How was it he described his chapel service?"

"'A hymn to cheer, a prayer to help, a few words of encouragement for the stumbling or overburdened brother on the way'—I've never forgotten it."

"Just what the church should give us. Well, Donald, many a time I've reproached myself for having been ower strict and stern wi' you before you went away."

"No, no, mother," he interrupted. "For you to blame yourself in the slightest degree is just to find a loving excuse for me—an excuse I never, never deserved."

"Oh, I don't forget my severe looks and words when you began to run wild—the regular tongue-lashing I gave you the very night before you left."

"Mother dear, you mustn't speak like that. Oh, what an ungrateful fellow I was!"

"Often and often I chided myself, but long since have I come to thank the Lord for everything that happened. For Mr. Dana made a man of you, Donald; his influence was needed to bring you once and for all to your better senses."

"And your influence, dear. I came back to you."

"Yes, a better man. So in everything I can now see the hand of Providence. And it makes me feel that what we call sorrow and tribulation to-day may be just the building of joy for to-morrow."

"That's the thought to drive away the tears," exclaimed Donald.

"And it's by thinking in this way that we can make every sorrow turn to happiness. Now, about California. I feel instinctively that there's going to be trouble for you there. You can never work for Mr. Sheldon without being thrown into the thick of a fight. And there may be other trouble as well, who can tell?"

"Who wants to worry about the future, anyhow? It is unknown and unknowable."

"My own view precisely, Donald. So, when we've packed our wee bit treasures, not for their value but just because they represent the treasures of memory, we'll start on our pilgrimage with happy hearts—to hear the dear old mission chimes."

"They seem now to be calling me back to California. Listen—'Will ye—no—come back—again?'" And it needed but a little imagination for the measured resonant intonation he gave to the words to be transformed into the appealing pealing of bells.

END OF BOOK II

BOOK III

THE LEADER

"He that is master of himself
becomes the master of others."

CHAPTER I

INSTILLING THE POISON

In the seclusion of Mr. Sheldon's private office above the arched gateway admitting to the ironworks the multifarious noises of the great plant in operation were subdued and blended into one even harmonious hum—a sort of industrial symphony played by an orchestra of clanging anvils, whirring wheels, roaring furnaces, with every now and then a note of dominance asserted by the powerful thud-thud of a hydraulic hammer or the sharp fusillading rat-tat-tat of a pneumatic riveter. There were both the sense of sound and the restfulness of comparative silence in the spacious apartment.

Donald Brodie was in consultation with the ironmaster, seated opposite to him at a table that flanked the big roller-top desk in the center of the room. Between them were outspread several plans of machinery, and Donald, lead pencil in hand, was checking off some figures on a memorandum form. He wore a brown tweed suit, and his hands, like his garments, were unsoiled by the grime and dust of the shops.

"I estimate the total cost of the installation," he was remarking, "materials and labor taken together, at $93,275.86."

Mr. Sheldon reached for the paper from which these

figures had been quoted, and spent a minute or two in running through the items.

"This looks all right, Brodie," he said finally. "You have got everything in first-class shape. Now, as I want you to gain the experience of completing each detail of this contract, take the papers to Mr. Grant's office, and get from him the regular terms—cash advance on signing, progressive payments, guarantees on both sides, and so on. Come in; I'll be disengaged almost immediately."

The last words were addressed to Wilmington, who at the moment had made his appearance at the doorway.

Brodie rose from his chair, rolled up the drawings, and resumed possession of the estimate. The banker meanwhile had advanced, and when the two men passed they exchanged good mornings. There was formal courtesy in the mutual greeting, but that was all; and as Brodie was in the act of closing the door, Wilmington sent a surreptitious scowl after him. But he was the smiling good fellow again when he turned round and took the seat the other had vacated.

"Well, what's new to-day?" he asked, as he deposited hat and gloves on the table.

"Nothing much," replied Mr. Sheldon. "Brodie looks like getting that contract for the Fresno pumping plant, and I am leaving the entire matter in his hands."

"Taking chances, aren't you, considering his limited experience?"

"Oh, Brodie's all there. During the eighteen months he's been with us he has acquired a rare grasp of the whole business, and is about the best hand at figures I've ever encountered. It was he who showed us the nigger in the woodpile as regards the Aloha calculations. That confounded freighter is going to involve us in considerable loss, I'm sorry to say."

"Well, mistakes were no doubt inevitable in a new departure."

"Perhaps. Yet I don't absolve myself from blame in having gone too precipitately and too heavily into the shipbuilding venture."

"You were gratifying the ambition of your life," observed Wilmington, with a faintly sarcastic smile.

"But ambition may not always be synonymous with good business," responded the ironmaster drily. "However, we have got to face up to the situation, and now that Brodie's taken the post of superintendent of labor, and will be responsible for estimating the costs of manufacture, a great weight has been taken off my mind. I can't be here, there, and everywhere as in former days. It is not so much that I am growing old as that the plant is growing too big for one-man management."

"How about Jimmy? Isn't it a mistake to keep him working in the shops?"

"Not at all. He is doing the best thing for himself and for me by learning the business thoroughly in every department. He may be a bit late in going through such an apprenticeship, but better late than never, as my old father was never tired of saying."

"That's been Brodie's advice, too, I warrant."

"Certainly. Brodie himself is a skilled mechanic in every line, from foundry work to pattern-making. The repair shop is the real test of all-round efficiency, and when we started him in there we soon found out the metal he was made of. But while mechanical skill and knowledge constitute the indispensable foundation, it is in executive ability and the successful handling of men that Brodie is going to excel. I saw that before I brought him into the office. He is just the fellow to climb high."

Wilmington winced a little, but still maintained his smile.

"Oh, I was merely thinking," he said, with assumed indifference, "that it might have been more in the natural order of things to have broken Jimmy into the

executive work and left Brodie in the shops, where he properly belongs."

For a moment Mr. Sheldon eyed the banker attentively.

"I have nothing against Jimmy," he replied. "Thank God, he has developed into a manly fellow; I am proud of him. But if in ten years' time Jimmy attains to one-half of the business knowledge and administrative ability that Donald Brodie now possesses, then I, as the boy's father, will be mighty well satisfied."

Wilmington looked grave and thoughtful.

"It beats me, Sheldon," he said, "how you have come to entertain such feelings for a man whose views, as you know, are so very dangerous."

"I take no stock in a man's views," retorted the ironmaster, with some impatience. "I judge him by his actions. Brodie has always been perfectly frank with me. I know that he is a sort of idealist, believing in capital and labor lying down together like the lion and the lamb, and in lots of other impossible things. But his theories don't interfere with the hard-headed common sense that makes him accept settled conditions and attempt reform only with a very cautious hand."

"But he is making innovations, all the same. What about this school for apprentices which I hear you are going to start up with the new year?"

"That is Brodie's suggestion, certainly. But it is along lines that are perfectly sound and rational. If young fellows are to learn a trade thoroughly, they have not only to acquire skill in the shops as tool-makers, pattern-makers, iron-molders and so on, but they must have a knowledge of the scientific principles that underlie their work. Only in this way can their intelligence and their fullest value to themselves and their employers be developed."

"This reformer seems to have had an apt pupil in yourself," remarked Wilmington, with a covert sneer.

"That may or may not be," rejoined Mr. Sheldon acidly. "But you seem to forget that I have fought the unions for years on this very apprenticeship question. Their attitude toward it just goes to show the habitual unfairness and blind animosity of the agitators in control. I want more apprentices and better-taught apprentices all the time. But as you know well, I have never yet put an apprentice permanently on a machinist's job, as some less scrupulous employers may do, and neglected his all-round training. I was always ready to go further still, but it has remained for Brodie to show me how this is possible. To pay night school fees, as I have often done in the past, is in nine cases out of ten absolutely useless. When lesson time comes the lad is physically tired, and his brain is jaded as well."

"And the remedy, then?" inquired the banker, with arched eyebrows.

"Is two hours of morning school right here in the plant, when mind and body are both fresh. After that the work in the shops will come as a pleasure and relief."

"Then these boys will draw two hours' pay for two hours' schooling? That's certainly reversing the old order of things with a vengeance."

"Of course, their school hours will count in the day's work. It is reasonable, and I wonder that I never thought of the plan before. Brodie tells me it has worked admirably in several plants in the east."

"And the schoolmaster will have to be paid," came the further objection.

"Brodie is going to take that duty on himself, for the start at all events."

Wilmington rose to his feet, his face flushed with the indignation he was no longer at pains to conceal.

"What do you know about that! A high-salaried official to spend his time in doing the work of a dollar-

a-day teacher! There's extravagance for you that would ruin any firm."

"Oh, that's nonsense, Wilmington! Brodie earns his salary twice over every day of his life."

"That is as you think, no doubt. But allow me to remind you that the plant during the past year has not been earning the interest on its bonds, not to mention the sinking fund."

Had a physical blow smitten Mr. Sheldon between the eyes he could not have looked more taken aback. But he recovered himself quickly, and replied with dignity.

"The profits have gone into capital expenditure, with your full concurrence—yes, I may even say at your own suggestion, Wilmington. And you have always assured me that the interest and sinking fund payments can stand over for a little time. There are substantial sums falling due to us before the end of the year."

"Yes, but that is banking on the future. In the present condition of international affairs, who can predict the state of the money market a month ahead? The very firms on whom you depend for those amounts may themselves be tied up through some panic resulting in financial stringency."

"Come now," smiled the ironmaster, "such a remote danger as that is not going to scare sensible business men like you or me."

"Then there are the labor unions to be reckoned with," persisted the banker. "Where would you be if there was a strike declared, and you could not live up to your contracts?"

"We have an indemnity clause for such a contingency."

"Yes; you may be released from damages for delays that are beyond your control. But you can't draw down your progressive payments for work while the plant

stands idle. You can't handle your final payments till you deliver the goods."

The ironmaster sat silent.

"Then where would the money for the overdue interest come from? And don't forget, too, that if the plant is closed down interest will be running on just the same. At six per cent. on a million dollars, five thousand dollars per month must be earned, whether there is trouble abroad or trouble with the labor councils of San Francisco."

Mr. Sheldon passed a hand wearily over his forehead.

"My God!" he murmured. "I was a fool to assent to that bond issue."

Wilmington swung round on him like a flash.

"Pardon me, the idea was your own. You wanted the shipbuilding equipment. You could not get it without cash. I merely showed you how the money could be obtained."

Then all of a sudden his manner changed. He resumed his seat, and leaned his arms on the table.

"But there, there, my dear Sheldon, it is not for you and me to talk like this. As you say, there is really nothing to fear. The bonds are in the hands of friends —my best friends. There will be no trouble from them. And as for labor difficulties, we've staved these off together for a long time, and can continue to do so, no doubt, indefinitely. But I confess I grow somewhat worried when I see you falling more and more under the influence of such a man as Brodie. At heart he is a dangerous agitator—and only the more dangerous because he is always prating about peaceful methods of reform. What guarantee have you that this very apprenticeship question which you are deliberately bringing again into the limelight is not going to involve you in a sharp controversy with the unions?"

"The unions be damned!" replied the ironmaster, drawing himself erect, his eyes again flashing with all

their old wonted fire. "I've fought them from the first, and I'll fight them to the end. What have they got to do with my training efficient and sufficient apprentices?"

"Everything, according to their views. Why, I heard Brodie speaking the other night in your own drawing-room about the vested rights of labor in a plant such as yours. The shell and the skeleton of the plant may belong to the employer, its walls and its machinery, but its soul is labor—the vivifying influence that sets it to work, and without which the whole outfit is dead junk incapable of earning a dollar. These were the man's very words, and you only laughed good-naturedly at his anarchistic outpourings."

Mr. Sheldon smiled; it was clear he recalled the incident with complacency that was still undisturbed.

"Oh, that was during some millennium talk in which he was indulging. As I said before, Brodie has too much horse-sense to apply such theories to practice. His views interested Leslie and her friends, and I let them go at that."

At the mention of the girl's name a glow of sullen wrath blazed into Wilmington's eyes.

"Yes, but Leslie and the others hung upon his words. Don't you see that he has got both her and Jimmy locoed? Man alive, you are nursing a viper in the very bosom of your family! And here at the plant you are shoving him forward—advancing him to higher and higher responsibility. As your banker, Sheldon, as the treasurer of your company, I feel bound to protest. As the trustee of the bondholders whose money you have staked in the future prosperity of the plant, I feel I should be lacking in my duty if I failed to enter a vigorous protest."

Wilmington had again risen to his feet. Across the table he was towering over the ironmaster, into whose

face there crept an ashen hue at the reiterated reference to the bondholders.

"For God's sake, don't keep on hammering at me like that," he testily objected. "Show me where I could get a more efficient officer than Brodie—one better skilled in the economic conditions of the plant, one standing higher with the foremen in every department, one wielding greater influence over the general body of the workmen themselves."

"Quite so; and in his power over the men lies our greatest danger. If you won't take my warning, then at least remember that I gave it. This fellow Brodie, the moment he gets the chance, will steer the Sheldon ironworks to ruin."

"You forget that I am at the helm, Wilmington. You are insanely prejudiced against the man."

The other paid no heed to the remark; he continued his diatribe.

"Before very long he will have you mixed up in trouble with the unions, no doubt in the ultimate hope of making you truckle to their demands."

"Not much!" gritted the ironmaster.

"And trouble with the unions at this time, as I have said, may mean trouble from the bondholders. Oh, keep calm; I am not hammering you, Sheldon. I am only bidding you respect your own life-work, and that of your father before you—the great plant your united efforts have built up till it has become one of the most powerful industrial factors on the coast. Are you going to take even the smallest risk of shipwreck to such an enterprise at the hands of a visionary fanatic whose horse-sense, as you term it, mainly consists in feathering his own nest while preaching even in your own home the most damnably insidious doctrines that amount to nothing more nor less than the confiscation of property?"

"No, no; that's going altogether too far," deprecated

Mr. Sheldon. "Don't be unjust to Brodie. Profit-sharing, if you like—he may be keen on that. But he has never said one word about confiscation."

"Which remark simply proves that you haven't got below the thin coating of sugar with which the fellow sweetens his arguments. However, that's enough; I've said a great deal more than I ever intended. Let us hope, Sheldon, that your judgment of men is better than mine and that everything will turn out for the best. It is not for me, of course, even to attempt to interfere with the actual running of the plant. That's your end of the business. And if we do have to fight the unions, you and I will stand together as we have always done."

Mr. Sheldon nodded approval, and Wilmington put added cordiality into his words as he went on:

"You know that I would be the last to see you humbled now, either through the wiles of an emissary or by an attack in the open."

"There need be no talk of humbling me," replied the ironmaster grimly. "You look after these bond matters for a couple of months more, Wilmington, and the unions may go to—the place from which they came."

"The same old warrior! Well, *adios* for the present. You'll at least think over what I've been saying."

While speaking, he had drawn on his gloves, and with a friendly wave of the hand he left the other to chew the cud of reflection.

In the corridor at the foot of the stairs Wilmington ran full tilt against Brodie. Again the eyes of the two men met; again they exchanged formal nods of recognition.

"By thunder, where have I seen that beggar's face before?" muttered the banker, as he passed through the archway into the crisp sunshine of the November morning.

CHAPTER II

JEALOUS PANGS

Among the little coterie of friends on Russian Hill the one individual who knew most about Donald Brodie was Norah's aunt, Miss Octavia Carew, and the very last individual who would have suspected the fact was Donald Brodie himself. Through his association with Jimmy he had been admitted from the first to the Sheldon home, and there on several occasions had met the lady in question. But their acquaintance had never passed beyond a few words of conversation on indifferent topics of the day. She had treated him as a promising young man, well favored in personal appearance, well spoken, well mannered. He had regarded her with the distant respect due to high social position and kindly graciousness. He knew that Miss Carew and his mother had struck up a friendship, but he had no idea of the degree of intimacy to which this had gradually extended.

It had now become the regular thing, however, for Miss Carew at least once a week to visit Mrs. Brodie in her little flat below the hill, and for Mrs. Brodie to spend whole afternoons in the Carew residence on the crown of the slope and only a block or two away from the house of the Sheldons. On these occasions the visitor brought her knitting—a Shetland wool shawl of such ample dimensions and fineness of texture as to

guarantee a full year of intermittent industry, while the hostess, to keep her guest company, would produce a piece of embroidery with which she had dallied, as Norah was wont to declare, ever since the young girl could remember. So, while the big wooden needles clicked and the gaily colored flowers grew under the careful silken stitches, there was fine excuse for long hours of gossipy conversation.

It was during these interchanges of news and reminiscence that the old maiden lady had come to learn all about the redoubtable Donald—from the cutting of his first tooth to the memorable week when, still in skirts, he had virtually taught himself the alphabet with the aid of a box of lettered bricks, and thence along the routine childhood path of whooping cough and measles to the days when his father had taken his son's education seriously in hand. And so the serial had leisurely proceeded from boyhood to manhood, even the one dubious episode of the wayward year of wandering from the home roof, although gently touched on, not being omitted. Thus it had naturally followed that, the historical record of incidents having reached a termination, the thoughts which now possessed the soul of Donald should be expounded by his mother to her keenly interested listener—his views on the labor question, his longings for the uplift of poverty-submerged humanity, his aspirations to aid in the more general distribution of happiness and content.

When Donald and Miss Carew now met, the pressure of her hand was perhaps a trifle warmer, her interest in his rapid promotion at the plant more cordial, her approval of his close comradeship with Norah's sweetheart. Jimmy Sheldon, more outspoken. But Brodie remained unconscious of her growing esteem and friendship, and his mother would have been the last to draw his attention to the fact lest she might thereby have brought trouble on herself for having resounded his praises.

It had come, therefore, as a genuine surprise to Donald that he should have been invited to Norah Carew's birthday ball. He had some time before adapted himself to the wearing of evening dress—this not without reluctance on his part but in deference to stern maternal ruling, based ingeniously enough upon his own favorite argument that it was a man's bounden duty to conform to the laws of the majority among whom he mixed and moved. So dress clothes, the one inconspicuous garb where all other men were similarly garbed, had become natural to him at a formal dinner party or an evening reception. During his old high school days in St. Louis he had learned to dance, and had taken pleasure in the pastime. Therefore, it was not any sense of awkwardness that gave him pause for thought about the birthday ball. His feeling was just one of wonderment at having been deemed worthy of such a social distinction.

"I guess it is for Jimmy's sake they ask me"—this had been the explanation he had ultimately arrived at while gazing at the card of invitation.

"I like that, young man!" Mrs. Brodie had indignantly exclaimed. "Don't you see that I'm invited, as well?"

"Of course, mother."

"Well, you don't imagine that it's for Jimmy's sake I'm bidden, do you? Though I may as well tell you that he's already been here and engaged me for a Highland schottische. That'll be news for you, I'm thinking."

News, indeed; and Donald could but smile in mental contemplation of Jimmy and his mother pirouetting to so lively a measure.

"So it's best to believe that we've been invited for our own sakes, Donald." Thus with a self-satisfied wag of her head for having upheld the family pride, the old lady solved the question over which her son had puzzled.

The ball took place on the very night of the day when Wilmington had visited the plant and endeavored to undermine Donald in Mr. Sheldon's estimation. The banker arrived late at the scene of festivities. The last people he expected to meet there were Donald Brodie and his mother. He was simply dumfounded when he caught sight of the latter seated in the reception hall, affably conversing amid a group of San Francisco's most exclusive dames.

But when he had pressed through the throng and commanded a view of the ballroom, Wilmington grew white to the very lips. For there floating around in the valse, with Donald as her partner, was Leslie Sheldon, his arm encircling her waist, her eyes shyly glancing up at his from time to time as some remark passed between them. To the jealous lover this scene was simply the culminating agony of six long months of slow torture.

When Donald Brodie had first come to San Francisco, Miss Sheldon had welcomed him to the family home as her brother's friend with frank cordiality. But on the occasions of his visits the two young men had spent most of their time together in Jimmy's room, and this arrangement she had made no attempt to disturb. Consequently there had been maintained between the mechanic and the employer's daughter a measure of distant reserve which Wilmington had noted with due approval.

With Donald's advancement at the plant, however, a change had come over things. For this the ironmaster was mainly responsible. Several times he had brought Brodie home with him informally to dinner, in order that they might continue their discussion on important matters engaging their attention at the plant. Then Mrs. Brodie came to be included in these family parties, and after the business talk in the library there would be an impromptu social hour in the music room, Norah and her aunt most likely also dropping in, with

or without a telephone call, to join the circle. Thus it had happened more than once that Wilmington had paid an evening visit only to find music and singing and lively conversation in progress. To his chagrin he could not fail to perceive that his arrival threw a wet blanket over the proceedings, and after futile efforts to appear gay and at his ease he would settle into a sour, sullen mood that seemed to affect the very atmosphere of the room.

To Jimmy Sheldon's mischievous spirit of fun the banker's obvious vexation was an opportunity not to be neglected. In prior days he had been many and many a time the victim of Wilmington's shafts of contemptuous sarcasm. Now was his chance to get even, and he would have been more than human had he failed to avail himself of it. So he took keen delight in pushing Donald to the forefront—in calling on him to give them "the pleasure of just another song," or in artfully directing the talk to some theme in the course of which Donald, his feelings once stirred, would become oblivious of his surroundings and give rein to the natural eloquence that revealed his intellectual powers at their best, the poetry of his imagination, the lovable tenderness of his heart.

And to the gloomily brooding onlooker the one who seemed never to tire of listening to the fellow's harangues was Leslie Sheldon—the girl Wilmington loved and had so long complacently marked for his own, even though her lips had steadily refused to speak the assenting word that would have given realization to his cherished dream of earthly happiness.

It was this self-sufficient interloper who dared to menace his plans! In the soul of Arthur Wilmington there were jealousy and hate for the man and withering contempt for all his theories.

Yet he dared not controvert these theories—he recognized his utter inability to grapple successfully with

such a widely read and agile debater as Brodie, who had brought under the thralldom of his mentality even the elder Sheldon himself, encased though he was in the armor-plate of life-long prejudices and bigoted convictions that had hitherto defied every attempt at argumentative penetration. Wilmington could but listen with the cynical smile of the one who is unconvinced and would depreciate, yet remains discreetly silent. With Donald accordingly rested the undisputed laurels of victory, even though he would bid his friends good night all unconscious of any triumph.

But there were two who began to realize that the prize of Leslie's love was steadily slipping away from the man who aspired to it. One of the twain was Wilmington himself, who felt the ground being cut from under his feet while he seemed powerless to prevent it. The other was Mrs. Brodie, who had divined in the young girl's eyes the first gleam of dawning love for her son. The mother nursed her secret in trembling joy of heart, while the victim of threatened discomfiture meditated schemes to save himself or at all events to be avenged.

This morning Wilmington had decided that further inactivity on his part must spell inevitable defeat, and he had gone down to the plant with deliberate intent to take the first steps toward having Donald Brodie thrown ignominiously from the place of authority into which he had so adroitly insinuated himself. To-night he had come to Norah's ball to have a long and intimate talk with Leslie. He was not a dancing man—professed to scorn the frivolous pastime, especially in its recent tango developments, as beneath the dignity of real men of affairs. But according to long-established friendly custom Leslie would have reserved at least a couple of places for his name on her program, and they could find a secluded nook where she might rest and he plead for her long-deferred answer—press for it, if need be, by showing how her interests were wrapped up in his, cautiously

hinting even that her father's fortune now lay in the hollow of his hand.

And here, in the least expected of all places, was his hated rival, in more familiar contact with the object of his affections than he himself had ever yet attained! Small wonder that the sight made Wilmington turn pale. But he bit his lip, and retreated from the doorway of the ballroom.

At last the valse was over, and several of the dancers were emerging into the outer apartments. Among the first comers was Norah, intent on welcoming any belated guests. To her Wilmington extended his hearty congratulations; he had already sent her a birthday present, and now she sweetly thanked him for his kind remembrance. But even before she had moved along, Wilmington was eagerly watching the other figures making their appearance.

At last the pair came forth, the tips of her fingers still resting on Brodie's arm. He heard a man behind him say:

"Who is that handsome fellow with Leslie Sheldon?"

The listener writhed with anguish, which turned to joy, however, when he caught the reply:

"Oh, he's of no account. A mere mechanic, I'm told, who has been clever enough to get some executive post at the Sheldon works."

Leslie meanwhile had joined a little group of friends, and Donald, with a parting bow, had left her side to find his mother. Wilmington stepped swiftly forward to intercept her before anyone else could claim her exclusive attention.

"Good evening, Leslie." His greeting was pleasant; his face betrayed no trace of the spasm of pain that had recently contorted it.

"You are late," she replied.

"Yes; it is our monthly balance at the bank. But I knew you would keep a place for me on your program."

He lifted the little card swinging from her waist.

"Jimmy comes next; then it is your turn."

"Oh, Jimmy won't mind. He can console himself with watching Norah. Come along, Leslie."

And he led her, unresisting, toward a little screened balcony hung with Chinese lanterns and overlooking the gardens similarly bedecked with ruby spots of radiance.

CHAPTER III

THE TIGHTENING HAND

It was Leslie who began the conversation. She had settled herself in a commodious rattan chair.

"You won't see papa here to-night. He came home from the works looking tired, and rather worried, I imagined. He dressed, and brought me along, but remained for less than an hour—just shook hands with Norah, Aunt Octavia, and a few friends, and then went off with the excuse that he had some business papers to run over. I hope everything is going on satisfactorily."

Wilmington stood with one hand resting on the back of a settee meant for two. His very attitude had invited Leslie to ensconce herself there. He had to be content now with the corner nearest her chair.

"Well, probably he is rather anxious," was his answer, as he seated himself. "It seems as if there may be troubles ahead."

"At the works? Labor troubles?"

He nodded assent to both queries.

"Oh, but that's incredible!" she expostulated. "Why, it is only the other day he remarked that it is a long time since he has had so easy a mind—that ever since Mr. Brodie took up the superintendence of labor every department had been running with oiled wheels."

At this introduction of his rival's name the banker ground his teeth—it was Brodie, Brodie, Brodie now every day and every hour of the day when the plant came to be mentioned. But he had his feelings under perfect control. Not a tremor of his voice betrayed him.

"It is very often the way in long-deferred labor disputes. The bolt at last drops from a blue sky."

"It is not the question of a strike surely?" There was deep anxiety in her look and tone. "I had come to hope that such a calamity need never befall."

"You don't understand the relentless pertinacity of those labor organizations. They may bide their time, but they are always watching for an opening. And that is precisely why I was at pains this morning to drop your father a word of warning."

He noticed the raising of her eyebrows; he read her thought of surprise that he should have been the one first to sense the impending danger.

"Oh, a good deal more can be heard on the outside than at the plant itself," he explained. "Your father relies on some of his old hands to keep him posted. But if at last there is to be a strike against the Sheldon company, it will be the leaders of the labor movement who will call it; not the men. At the bank several customers have told me that there are rumors afloat about secret preparations for a final trial of strength."

"On what grounds, if the men at work are perfectly contented?"

"Well, first and foremost, recognition of the unions—the old standing sore. Mr. Sheldon is the only big employer in San Francisco to-day who refuses to deal with the union officers. From their point of view this is the one blot on the city's record—there have been protests even from the great central labor organizations in Chicago against any longer delay in fighting the issue."

"I do wish father would yield in this matter at least. Mr. Brodie has advised him frankly that, apart from

the question of right or wrong, it is the only prudent course to follow."

"Naturally. And I suppose that the labor leaders, with one of their avowed sympathizers in the enemy's camp, find the time opportune to demand it."

"I don't quite understand.'

"They no doubt think that with Mr. Brodie installed as your father's right-hand man at the plant they have now the entering wedge that has only to be driven home to break down the Sheldon defenses."

Leslie looked at him in pained protestation.

"But Mr. Brodie is the soul of honor—he is perfectly loyal to father."

"He may be still more loyal to his socialist principles. His temporizing with your father, all his high-flown talk about labor and capital meeting on the middle ground, compromising their differences at every stage so as to admit of gradual advancement toward fixed industrial peace——"

"Surely words of wisdom," interrupted Leslie eagerly.

"May be just so much dust for our eyes while he intrenches himself in a position of dominance at the plant from which he may dictate concessions for his friends, the men of his own stripe, the trades-union extremists."

As he delivered this thrust Wilmington nonchalantly drew a silver box from his hip pocket, and after the usual courteous glance for permission took the same as granted and lighted a cigarette.

Leslie had straightened herself in her seat; her lips were compressed, her hands were tightly interlocked upon her lap. For a moment she remained silent and thoughtful. At last she looked up resolutely; her voice rang resolutely.

"Then you mean to impute deliberate perfidy to Mr. Brodie?" she inquired.

"No, no," he placidly rejoined. "I am simply arguing on the probability of things. In war everything is

fair, and in the bitter fight between capital and labor individual leaders would be foolishly culpable if they did not seize every possible advantage. It is the result that counts, not the means of attaining it. And from his own standpoint such a man as Brodie may be the soul of honor, as you choose to phrase it, even when engaged in the act of unlocking the citadel on the inside for the admission of his confederates, the only true regenerators of downtrodden humanity, as he no doubt believes them to be."

"He is utterly incapable of such conduct," exclaimed Leslie warmly and fearlessly.

"Let us at least hope so," was the tranquil rejoinder. "But I am at a loss to understand why, at a time when the war chest of the unions is reputed to be full and prepared for any emergency, he should be stirring up another cause of bitter controversy."

"And this?" She was just as cool and collected now as himself.

"Oh, the old apprenticeship difficulty. The unions stand solid in requiring a voice as to the number of apprentices employed in any shop. Some of the leaders would even have the workers nominate the learners."

"Mr. Brodie declares this to be preposterous and impossible. He is against the closed union in any shape or form. The nomination of apprentices would be one of the most insidious and dangerous methods of establishing close monopolies of labor. I have listened to Jimmy and him discussing the question many times."

"You seem to have taken a pretty keen interest in their conversations."

"Why not? The time has come when women should follow every public question. And I can see now that it is neglect in the proper training of apprentices that has grown to be one of the worst features of the American industrial world to-day. We cannot purchase advantages for the present generation of workers by wrong-

ing the rising generation—we dare not make the field of skilled labor a preserve for the men by excluding the boys."

In spite of himself, a lurking angry sneer showed itself at the corners of Wilmington's mouth. He was furious; he could hear the very voice of Brodie, whom he detested, speaking through the lips of this girl whom he loved. But with an effort he continued to exercise stern self-repression.

"I think Mr. Brodie's scheme for educating the apprentices at the plant a splendid one," she continued. "I was so delighted when papa saw it that way too!"

"It is waving a red rag, all the same, in the face of the trades-unionist bull."

Quick as thought Leslie took advantage of the joint exposed in his argumentative armor.

"Which shows how ridiculous and unjust are your suspicions against Mr. Brodie. He is as ready to fight the abuses of labor domination as those of capitalistic domination."

But Wilmington just as adroitly recovered his guard.

"Or he may be deliberately affording added provocation to a quarrel. A little time may disclose to us some strange things."

"And meanwhile?"

"I have warned you, Leslie, as well as your father, that Brodie's increasing influence at the plant may have the most serious consequences. A big strike just now might mean disaster for the company."

"But father has always been prepared to face a strike —been ready for it at any time."

"He is not ready for it at the present moment, let me tell you. It is not his willingness to fight that I am questioning. But can the finances of the company stand the strain?" he asked, with measured significance. "Don't you realize the great expenditures that have been incurred in equipping the shipyards?"

"But there has never been any lack of capital, and the extension of the business will bring its own returns."

"In time, perhaps. But meanwhile invested capital must be paid for—bonds must earn their interest."

"Bonds!" She whispered the word in the intensity of her surprise.

"Well, I don't know whether I should talk any more about this," he said, coolly lighting a fresh cigarette from the stub between finger and thumb. "If Mr. Sheldon has not informed you how the shipbuilding end of the business was financed, it is hardly for me to do so."

"My father is not accustomed to consult me about business finance," she replied, with dignity.

"Oh, but a million-dollar bond issue on a plant becomes known to all the world. I never dreamt it would be news to you, Leslie."

"I have not heard of it until now," she faltered.

"Well, it is perhaps best that you should know all the risks attaching to a strike. If the works are to be shut down, if there is to be trouble and rioting that may threaten damage to buildings and machinery, then you may take it from me as a banker than the bondholders will foreclose. Interest is already overdue; they would act immediately."

"Which would mean?"

"That the plant would pass out of your father's hands into theirs."

The girl gave a little shiver.

"Such a disgrace would kill him," she murmured.

Wilmington discarded the cigarette from which he had taken but a single whiff. He leaned over toward her. He spoke earnestly and affectionately.

"It is to guard against disaster, Leslie, that I am pleading both with you and your father to get rid of that trouble-maker, Brodie." His voice hardened.

"Throw the fellow out, and there will be no strike, I feel confident. And in that event I'll be able to manage the bondholders."

"But what has he done to deserve this? Even if to deprive him of his position would avert loss from us, surely it would be cruel injustice to him."

"Leslie, I am striving to save the plant for your father—which means for you and for Jimmy in the long run. Won't you help me?"

"Never by a wilful act of wrong. And I misjudge my father if he would consent to throw down another man, an innocent man, to save himself from possible annoyance." She had risen from her chair; one hand was pressed against her breast, the other hung determinedly clenched by her side. "For I know, just as sure as the stars are shining above us, that Donald Brodie is no deceitful trouble-maker, that he is absolutely honest, that if conflict there must be he will stand for right to both sides—for the wise and prudent mutual concessions that will give the fresh lease of peace during which human progress may go on."

Again it was the thoughts and almost the very words of Donald Brodie with which his ears were being assailed. Was this the unassuming and undemonstrative young woman who up to a year or so ago had been wont to accept every expression of opinion he, Wilmington, might vouchsafe with uncontradicting deference? Here was she now combating him at all points. The new ideas with which her mind had been saturated seemed to have resulted in a fresh precipitation of crystals that had changed her whole personality. Just as during Brodie's arguments Wilmington would sit in squelched silence. now under her vigorous onslaught he had to admit his complete discomfiture.

He had come to break his rival, to press his own claims on her gratitude. He found his proffered services ignored, her faith in the other man not to be shaken. He

had come to speak of love, but by the feelings he had evoked had made the subject for the moment impossible.

But the bull-dog tenacity of the man was not to be denied. By his own foresight he had provided for this very contingency of first failure. He had tried the more pleasant procedure for the elimination of Brodie, for the identification of the Sheldon interests with his own, for the harmonious ringing of wedding bells. But, though foiled in this approach, there was the other avenue open to him. The power to crush was still his, the power to bring both father and daughter to their knees, to make them his suppliants for the saving of the family name and fortune. He could afford to smile, even though the smile were a sardonic one. And through every fiber of his being there ran a thrill of keen delight —the delight of the masterful conqueror, the anticipatory delight of the cruel final triumph that would yet compel subjection to his will. To-day Leslie Sheldon might evade him, but in a very brief time she would be pleading with him for her father's sake, her brother's sake, her own sake as well. And this man Brodie would then be but a straw in the cyclone path of his conquest.

So yet once again the immediate repulse could be taken with fortitude and in calm confidence as to the ultimate issue. He let her flow of language exhaust itself. His look was only one of indulgence as he rose to his feet.

"Well, my dear Leslie," he said very quietly, "if trouble comes at the plant, remember I have done my best to warn you. And remember, too, that I am always ready to stand by you and your father."

His submissiveness disarmed her.

"You have ever been our good friend," she murmured gratefully. "And I am sure you have only to understand Mr. Brodie better to join hands with him—to make your powerful influences one and the same."

They had now moved toward the reception hall. The

preliminary bars of dance music floated from the ballroom. Leslie saw advancing in her direction a well-known young lawyer who happened to be next on her program.

"I am not much in the mood for more dancing tonight," she said wistfully. "But I have engagements that must be kept. Here is Mr. Fern coming for me now. So you will excuse me."

"Good night," he said. "I am going home." And with a bow he relinquished her to her partner.

When Wilmington reached his rooms, although the hour was close on midnight he sent a call over the telephone wire. Thirty minutes later Dan Bradshaw, the labor leader, was ushered up the service stairway by the smiling cerulean-robed Chinese boy, and it was far into the small hours before the earnest consultation between him and Wilmington came to a close. And when at last the visitor was gone and the master of the house had retired to rest, the guileless celestial in his tiny sleeping room at the end of the vestibule was industriously mapping further hieroglyphic memoranda into his diary.

CHAPTER IV

THE GAGE OF BATTLE

A whisper had run through the plant that at last a struggle was impending between the labor council and the Sheldon Manufacturing Company. The talk caused no surprise; the only wonder was that the issue had been so long deferred. Every one was aware that all the preliminary preparations had long ago been made in anticipation of the combat. But nobody seemed to know exactly what had brought the long-standing quarrel to a definite crisis. "Orders from labor headquarters, no doubt," was the general explanation hazarded. Work proceeded as usual, without so much as a ripple of unpleasantness on the part of the unionists toward the minority of non-union men working in their midst—in itself a significant indication of the discipline to which the organized ranks had attained.

The signs of the times were duly communicated to Mr. Sheldon by one or two of the veteran hands. But the real "old guard" of stalwarts who had formerly surrounded him was now broken and dispersed—some to follow less strenuous pursuits than toil in the foundry or at a drilling-machine, others to the abodes of bliss, where factory whistles cease from troubling and the union delegate is at rest. And in the voices and in the eyes of the few who came timidly to drop a word of warning Mr. Sheldon could detect an appealing hope

that peace might be purchased, even at some sacrifice of honest conviction.

But Sheldon's nerves were at tense—his temper had acquired the rasp of a rough file. He felt himself to be at outs with all the world; even Wilmington, with his veiled threats about possible trouble from the bondholders, had gone back on him. Strange as it might seem, the one man with whom he worked placidly side by side, whose very presence acted as an unguent to his querulousness, was Donald Brodie—the man whose views in regard to the treatment of labor were diametrically opposed to his own, yet the one man who amidst the tottering pillars all around carried himself with the calm confidence that both showed and inspired faith in the ultimate outcome of events.

Some days had passed; the whispers among the workmen had been succeeded by hints in the newspapers of an approaching conflict. Then came the definite report that the labor council had drawn up an ultimatum.

That very afternoon a delegation of three well-known unionist leaders almost forced themselves into Mr. Sheldon's sanctum at the works. He knew them all by sight and by reputation—Dan Bradshaw, the hard-headed American organizer, whose former sphere of activity had been in Pittsburg; Otto Schwartz, the German of reputedly anarchistic proclivities; Patrick Hogan, the man of Irish blood with the merry eye and the suave tongue that had won more recruits for unionism than either logic or coercion had ever done.

Mr. Sheldon motioned his visitors to seats. He had lost none of his fine old-time courtesy. But his face was stern; his voice had the hardness and the coldness of steel.

"Your business, please?"

"We are a delegation from the labor council," replied Bradshaw, who had taken the central chair and constituted himself the spokesman of the party.

"As a delegation from the outside, I decline to meet you. I discuss labor questions when they arise with my own men."

"We expected that answer," returned Bradshaw coolly. "But perhaps you will hear a few words I've got to say as man to man."

"On this understanding, then, go ahead."

"The great majority of your shopmen are members of our unions."

"That's an open question. My foremen have instructions never to discriminate between unionists or non-unionists. The only tests for employment in this plant are skill, industry and good conduct."

The Irishman smiled; the German, whose eyelids were inflamed and red, impatiently blinked his eyes. Bradshaw remained quite unruffled.

"Well, that has to be changed from now on. Our men refuse any longer to work with scabs."

"Don't use that insulting word here!" rapped Mr. Sheldon, with sharp asperity. "There are honest and honorable men in my employment who would starve rather than put themselves under the heel of labor agitators like you. I am certainly not going to be made the tool to force them into virtual slavery."

Bradshaw with one hand held back the German in his chair.

"Leave this to me," he muttered authoritatively. Then he resumed with Mr. Sheldon. "Oh, we are well acquainted with your views on trades-unionism. But the council considered that you should have at least the final chance to alter them and get into line. We want to be fair even with you, our bitterest enemy in all San Francisco."

"Thanks for the compliment," replied Mr. Sheldon, with a scornful smile.

Bradshaw drew a paper from the breast pocket of his coat. This he held aloft without unfolding it.

"Here are our formal demands," he said. "I don't need to read them in detail; you can do that at your leisure, Mr. Sheldon. You have already been forced to concede the union minimum scale of wages and the eight-hour day."

"These were no forced concessions; they were made long ago of my own free will."

"Gottdam, yes," cried the German, "because mit less vages und longer hours your vorks could not for one veek open have remained."

"That's enough, Otto," laughed the Irishman, flinging a brawny arm around the shoulders of the irascible Teuton. "You're quite right, old man, and he knows it. But we didn't come here to swap angry words."

"Our terms, in brief," resumed the leader, "are firstly recognition of the unions, secondly the closed shop, thirdly regulation by the unions of the apprentice system, and fourthly abolition of piece work and premiums."

"Nothing else?" asked the ironmaster cynically. "Well, we need not go further than the first two demands. I know exactly what recognition of your unions and the closed shop would eventually mean. You want to run the entire plant. But you are just as incapable of doing that as I am resolutely determined, come what may, never to yield my business into your hands."

With these words the ironmaster rose to his feet. The three delegates followed his example.

"So that is your last word?" asked the leader.

"My last word. Good afternoon."

In silence Bradshaw deposited the written ultimatum on the table beside Mr. Sheldon.

The latter picked up the document, tore it, still unopened, into several pieces, and tossed the fragments into the waste paper basket.

"I never temporize," he said incisively. "I told you that my last word had been spoken."

"You're a fighter, all right," murmured Hogan, half in admiration.

"Very well," remarked Bradshaw quietly. "Then it only remains for me to tell you that at eleven o'clock next Tuesday morning your men will quit work. I am speaking for machinists, boiler-makers, carpenters, electrical workers——"

"So far as I am concerned," interrupted the ironmaster, "you are speaking only for yourself, sir. As I said before, good afternoon." And he touched a buzzer at the side of his desk.

"Show the gentlemen downstairs, John"—this to a diminutive office boy who had promptly appeared at the doorway.

Hogan and Bradshaw exchanged smiles. But the German's contemptuous glance at the youngster was swiftly transformed into a glare of wrath upon the employer. There was red in his eyes now, as well as in his eyelids. His whole frame quivered in the Irishman's restraining grasp.

"Mein Gott, to break efery bone in your body I vould lofe!" he spluttered.

But his comrades hustled him away, and Mr. Sheldon was alone.

Tingling through the ironmaster's nerves was the fighting thrill of first blood drawn. Without analyzing the situation, he had the vague satisfaction of having been one against three, and of having flung defiance in the face of the outnumbering enemy. But soon followed the reaction; he began to measure at its true trivial worth this affair of outposts, and to reflect upon the real struggle he had evoked—the struggle into which but a year or two before he would have flung himself ardently and with grim joy, but from which now in his heart of hearts he shrank with a dull sense of dread.

He began to pace the room. Then he paused at one

of the windows overlooking the plant and gazed out pensively into the descending dusk of evening. Half unconsciously he watched the flitting figures of men. Through the open door of the foundry he caught the glow of molten metal pouring from a cupola. The sounds of the works asserted themselves upon his hearing—the clang of steel on steel, the whirr of belts and wheels, the ponderous thumping of mighty steam-hammers, the music which all through his vigorous life he had loved.

Beneath him and around him, on those acres of shop floors, were a thousand men, his fellow-toilers—for on him the brain-worker, even more than on them, the muscle-workers, had fallen the burden of continuous toil, the strain of responsibility which, unknown to himself, had at last brought his powers of endurance almost to the snapping point. And while he listened to the reverberant sounds of their handiwork, into the mind of the ironmaster came the uneasy question—how much did he really know about the lives of these men, their homes and families, their needs, their longings, their unselfish struggles for those they loved, their loyal comradeship among themselves which the daily performance of tasks in common cannot fail to engender? And for the first time in his life the old employer felt himself culpably out of touch with his fellow-workers.

Then arose the still more uneasy thought—that it was by his dominant and uncontrolled will that a struggle for everything they owned was being thrust upon those hundreds of toilers. If he, the master, chose to bend, there would be peace; by his remaining inflexible, there was war, deadly war, with all the concomitant sufferings of deadly war, not merely for the active combatants, but for the innocent women and children who outnumbered these combatants probably three or four times. The happiness of several thousand lives was at stake, and it was his hand alone that had cast the die—it was he

alone, uncounseled and asking counsel of none, who had accepted the challenge and decreed the combat. Was this a right responsibility for one single individual to take upon himself? The mere doubt caused a heart-sinking sensation.

And this sickening feeling of depression brought a vague sense of shaken confidence in his own physical strength. Not that he felt ill—not that he would admit to himself any waning of his powers. But he was older now than he used to be—constitutionally disposed for rest and leisure rather than for excitement and fatigue. It was more the intolerable burden of responsibility that crushed him. What if he were to break down for a day, even for a single hour, now that the fight of his life had at last come?

But there was not only distrust in his physical capacity for endurance. Even more disconcerting was the distrust in deep-rooted convictions. For full twenty years he had fought trades-unionism with unwavering belief in the rightness and justness of his arguments. But to-night he found himself questioning himself—were these arguments really right, were the conclusions drawn from them really just? This new feeling of uncertainty was in itself gravely perturbing.

But whom was he to consult? Whose judgment might be better than his own?

The searching inquiry revealed to him how utterly friendless and forlorn he stood in the world. He, the man with a thousand employees, had failed to make among them a single real friend. He had stood aloof, self-centered, too occupied with the one big thing in his life to give attention to the other things. He had watched the great tree grow, but had lost harvest after harvest of the sweet-scented flowerets carpeting the ground at its base. He had built up a colossal enterprise. He had accumulated a splendid fortune—locked up, no doubt, in plant, machinery and buildings, but a

rich income-earning fortune, all the same. He was ranked among the millionaires, among America's most successful men of business. Yet what did his success amount to? Several millions of dollars, perhaps, but not one single friend!

Gazing out there upon the densely peopled humming hive of industry he had created, this reflection passed through his mind, and the dismal poverty of his life's achievement appalled him. Not a single friend! Even the old-time relations with Wilmington were subtly changed; the banker was no longer the comrade in arms, but the man with the goad, urging Sheldon into the fight so that the investment of outsiders might be protected. The ironmaster was fond of Donald Brodie, admired his ability and energy. But Brodie had only recently come into his life, and then, too, as a disturber of beliefs, not as a supporter rallying to uphold them. Most of his old foremen were gone, and the new and younger men were strangers to him in mind, if not in person. Amidst the throbbing life of the great plant the man who owned and controlled it felt strangely and pathetically alone.

But all of a sudden the five-o'clock whistle sounded and the train of saddened reverie was rudely broken. Out of every doorway in the dozen or more of workshops dense crowds of men were swarming.

"Gad! They must have dropped their tools the moment the whistle went off," murmured Mr. Sheldon.

Such was the thought to which his brain had been suddenly switched. There was intense bitterness in the low-spoken soliloquy, supreme contempt in the accompanying expression of features.

"It was mighty different in my father's days. Then we didn't mind an extra few minutes to finish the job on hand. Yes; the times are indeed changed."

He turned from the window, and resumed his desk-chair.

Times had changed, indeed, but the old employer did

not see that he himself was the anachronism. The times had changed, but he had failed to change with them, had failed to adapt himself to changing conditions, to the inevitable trend of economic forces. He could count it a sign of human decadence that men's toil should be weighed in the scales of recompense with the same exactitude as a keg of nails or a pound of butter, oblivious of the fact that measure for measure is as necessarily the law of the modern factory as the law of the hardware or grocery store.

The man who clings to the belief that the antiquated stagecoach is just as good a method of locomotion as the automobile is left a hopeless laggard on the road of universal progress. Along that swiftly traversed road viewpoints and views are constantly changing, and the voyager who is always praising past things has simply not readjusted his eyes in proper focus to new surroundings, new facts, new thoughts, new arguments, new inventions, new industrial relations—to the thousand and one new things that are the summation of mankind's advancement. We should not expect to go through life without an occasional change of beliefs any more than without change of garments. Both garments and beliefs are liable to become tattered and worn out, making him who adheres to their threadbare raggedness an object of pity or of derision.

Mr. Sheldon had rested an elbow on the desk, his finger tips were lightly pressed against his forehead.

"Yes, times are changed," his musing continued. "The old spirit of pride in one's work, of loyalty to the firm is dead. The curse of trades-unionism has blighted the whole land." His clenched fist descended on the blotting-pad, and his eyes gazed straight in front of him. "By the Lord, I am glad after all that I am going to fight it to a finish!"

CHAPTER V

THE LAW OF THE COMPROMISE

The appointed hour came, the strikers gathered together such tools as were their personal property and, punching their numbers on the time-clocks, passed out of the plant. The great throng streaming up the roadway showed at a glance that the exodus was a general one. Within the fenced enclosure the sudden silence, the aspect of desertion, the feeling of desolation, conveyed by the presence of a few forlorn figures where fifteen minutes before there had been busy crowds, gave the impression that a veritable tidal wave had swept the shops. Organized labor had certainly succeeded in getting in the first smashing blow on its adversary.

The strength of the movement was further revealed by its perfect orderliness. There were no threatening cries, no triumphant shouts; almost complete silence prevailed. A battalion of trained soldiers could not have executed an evolution with more scrupulous regard to discipline and self-restraint.

It was the noontide hour, and gathered in the office of the president of the company were Mr. Sheldon himself; the treasurer, Arthur Wilmington; Brodie, the superintendent of labor; the younger Sheldon, supporting his father; the heads of the business staff, and ten or a

dozen foremen from the various workshops. The last produced their muster rolls, showing in the aggregate little more than sixty hands remaining at their posts throughout the entire plant. Therefore, not far short of ninety-five per cent. of the workers had declared their affiliation with trades-unionism. Even the apprentices had followed the all-powerful example of their elders and taken their departure. Richard Sheldon could not mask his surprise and chagrin at the strength of the opposition that had developed against him. But he accepted the facts and the figures with unflinching intrepidity.

Several of the foremen at once disclosed either their secret sympathy with the objects of the strike or the prudential considerations that had been inspired by its magnitude. These men applied for leave of absence pending settlement of the dispute. Their request was promptly granted, while the remnant loyalists were dispatched to their respective departments with orders to complete such work as it was possible to handle with their diminished forces. The office heads received instructions to cut down the clerical staff, but to offer alternative positions as day or night watchmen to all who might be willing to volunteer for special services of this nature.

The Sheldons, with Wilmington and Brodie, remained in consultation.

The ironmaster announced his intention of sending telegraphic night letters to eastern organizations of strike-breakers, calling for machinists and mechanics to take the places of the men who had surrendered their jobs. Wilmington urged reconsideration of this proposal for reasons of economy; he prophesied that the strike movement would languish after a few weeks without the necessity of resorting to so costly a means for its disruption. Brodie gave identical counsel, but for quite a different reason; he submitted that there would be better

hope of an amicable settlement if passions were not inflamed by the course suggested. Jimmy supported Donald's argument, expressing his belief that there would be grave risk of reprisals and possible injury to the plant and machinery if professional strike-breakers were introduced. Mr. Sheldon finally admitted the wisdom of waiting a while before resorting to extreme measures.

Then Brodie had a proposal to make.

By concentrating the available labor forces, one valuable consignment of machinery for a certain power-plant in Nevada could be delivered by contract time in early January. He would resign his executive post, return to mechanic's work and wages, and with Jimmy's aid superintend the completion of this important contract.

Wilmington expressed the opinion that all such piecemeal efforts could not but prove futile and abortive. In view of the unexpected seriousness of the strike, he would rather see a complete shut-down of the plant until peace was restored.

But Mr. Sheldon promptly negatived any suggestion of the kind.

"Not on your life!" he declared, his voice vibrant with determination. "Don't for one moment imagine that I am going to be mean enough to betray the men, few though they be, who are standing by the Sheldon ironworks and by me. The plant shall continue its operations to the fullest extent of our ability to run it. Besides, if we have only sixty hands to-day, this won't be the number for very long. There are plenty of mechanics looking for jobs, and they will soon begin to filter into the works to snap up the permanent places we shall guarantee them. Set your mind easy on that score, Wilmington."

The latter merely smiled his difference of opinion.

Then the ironmaster turned to Donald.

"I'll gladly avail myself of your offer, Brodie, except so far as the salary part of it is concerned. Get that

machinery out for the Nevada people, and we'll show those labor union bull-dozers that Dick Sheldon is not going to be downed by them, not by a damned sight!"

"Bravo, dad!" cried Jimmy. "We'll see this fight through, never fear."

Wilmington bestowed an insolent stare upon Brodie.

"What will your trades-union friends think of you," he asked, with ill-disguised malice, "when they learn that you are working as a strike-breaker?"

"It is immaterial to me what they think," replied Donald impassively. "If a man is clear to his own conscience, that's the only thing that counts."

A man's own conscience is the only final and unanswerable court of appeal. The motives prompting to any deed or line of action may be based on religious beliefs, political beliefs, economic beliefs; but if these beliefs are sincerely held, then are the impelling motives the only right and honorable ones to be followed. Self-interest, the lust for power, the mere love of popularity, may tempt to the other path. But the compass needle of conscience always points to the pole-star of duty, and the mariner on life's ocean who would gain the haven of happiness can steer no other course but that directed by the eternal constellations above him, or, when troublous clouds obscure the night sky or the daylight dazzle of events bedims their soft effulgence, by the binnacle which God has given to man to show the true, although temporarily unseen, place in the firmament that is occupied by the pivotal northern star. Unknown dangers may be ahead—difficulties, disappointments, seeming disasters—but if conscience inflexibly guides, then all is well; the storm-beaten steersman standing resolute at the wheel may take to himself the stern and proud consolation that had he diverged one point to port or starboard of the course set by conscientious belief in the honesty of his motives then the shipwreck of the craft confided to his

care, his immortal soul, would have been indeed complete and irreparable. It is obedience to conscience alone that makes a man master of his fate and captain of his soul.

The opinion of the world at large is of no importance. Even in the case of the high and mighty ones among men, the individuals whose names and doings may be on the lips of all the people, the real actuating motives are revealed only to a very few intimates, and even by them can be but partly comprehended. The world at large knows nothing, and therefore personal popularity counts for nothing in estimating the true worth of a man. In point of fact the love and respect of a few close friends tells far more than the plaudits of a multitude, for the intimates at least glimpse the actuating high principles while the mob can have not a single ray of penetrating vision. Thus need a man justify himself only to himself. If he cannot do this, yet gains the universal applause of his fellows, he none the less knows in his heart of hearts that he is in the wrong. Conversely the strong man disregards the reckoning of others, provided that he is satisfied with the reckoning of his own conscience.

Donald Brodie might be sneered at by Wilmington as a strike-breaker, denounced by the labor unions as a "scab." But the thought caused him not one moment of worry. For in deciding on his line of action he was simply following the dictates of his conscience. The unknowing crowd might misunderstand him, but the respect of his intimates who did understand him was secure. And this, next to the respect of his own conscience, was the only thing for which he cared.

The more he had studied trades-union problems the more paramount in his mind had become the law of the compromise. In all his discussions he accepted and urged obedience to this law. For it is only by compromise that the gradual yet certain advancement of social conditions can be maintained—that the swiftest and fullest evolution toward universal happiness can pro-

ceed. To disobey the law of the compromise is to retard the progress of mankind. Compromise is an essential factor in the divine scheme—the governor-balls on the engine that regulate the supply of power in strict proportion to the capacity for performance, the safety-valve midway between the full head of steam and the task to be accomplished.

Therefore, the well-balanced mind of Donald Brodie refused to blame employers for being slow and cautious in granting the demands of organized labor. But he required them to go to the fullest possible limit of concession consistent with prudence, and further to remember that evolution is an eternal process, that progress along every line of human endeavor can never be stopped, that the limit of prudence to-day will for certain be only a far-back landmark a generation hereafter.

So in the very nature of things there can be no finality to the process of industrial evolution—capital will never be able to say to labor: "Thus far and no further," except with the qualifying added words "for the present, at least."

Progress by slow gradations is the fundamental law of evolution. It is attained only by compromise between opposing forces, and therefore the law of the compromise becomes in itself the fundamental law in all human affairs. It is the law on which majority rule is based—the law that keeps all reasonable men to the middle ground of controversy.

In a tempestuous sea the tow-rope must be paid out cautiously inch by inch. To demand a fathom at a time is ignorance of seamanship; to yield the fathom of slack would be folly, meaning inevitable snapping of the cable the moment the first jerk pulls it taut again. Then come all the dangers, difficulties, and delays of restoring connection between the two plunging vessels. It is only the inch-by-inch method that will enable the gallant and powerful tugboat of progress to pull the richly freighted

galleon of human happiness into the sheltered roadstead where, the perils of wild seas traversed, the vicissitudes and sufferings of the long voyage will be but the memory of a bad dream—a triumphant memory, for the greatest joy in the heart of mankind is to have stood the tests of courage and endurance and come through unscathed.

The world's thinkers have the haven in mental view, but they realize that it is not individual men, nor any single generation of men, that can hope to attain it, but the human race as a whole. It just behooves each individual and each generation to abide patiently and self-denyingly to the inch-by-inch law of safe progression—to do their strenuous best to preserve the tow-rope from parting so that tugboat and cargo-ship can battle onward, continuously onward, through the turmoil of elements toward the longed-for but yet-distant goal.

Such men are militant in ideas but pacific in practice. They have not only the strength to pull and the strength to resist the pull, but the still finer moral strength to relax and yield when progress demands and prudence permits. They are the men who hold the struggling factions of labor and capital to the middle ground—they are the hope of both sides, of humanity as a whole. To them the law of the compromise becomes the most sacred obligation, the real triumph of unselfishness.

To this school of philosophy Donald Brodie belonged—the inch-by-inch philosophy that sees in attempted swifter progression only delay for the eventual attainment of desiderated ends. It is not an easy philosophy to attain, or to teach among struggling and suffering mankind. Individuals feel their own individual pangs, and forget or fail to comprehend that these are of infinitesimal account when weighed against the general advancement that is sweeping irresistibly on. They cannot grasp the lofty thought, attain to the lofty altruism, that all must be well since all grows better. It is igno-

rance and selfishness that breed the anarchist and the dynamiter—human atoms impatient of the slow aggregate evolution and resorting in anger or despair to supposed methods of acceleration which in reality retard. Without attempting to justify or excuse such men, the thinking world can pity them. But the thinking world, the inch-by-inch philosophers, also recognize that there can be no sudden and universal panacea for individual human woes, that the hope of mankind lies in gradual general evolution—in the law of the compromise which holds opposing forces to the middle ground, which keeps the tow-rope taut and safe, which enables the governor-balls to control the steam that, uncontrolled, would wreck the engines of progressive civilization.

As a firm believer in compromise, Donald Brodie had done his level best to induce Mr. Sheldon to recognize the labor unions. He showed that in business matters the ironmaster was already recognizing unions every day of his life. The Sheldon company itself was the union of what a generation or two ago would have been a dozen smaller workshops. It took orders for machinery from mining companies, power companies, co-operative irrigation companies, each and all of them unions in the strictest sense of the word. It recognized the officers of these unions in their representative capacity when it accepted their signed orders as obligatory upon the whole body of their stockholders. Why not, therefore, accord to labor in the disposal of its one particular commodity the similar right to recognition, and receive its officers as speaking for the individuals who had placed them in their representative position? For Mr. Sheldon to yield the point might imply the sacrifice of a life-long prejudice or even a reasoned conviction, but the law of the compromise enjoined the sacrifice.

On the other hand, while Brodie held the view that it would be best even for capital that all labor in each par-

ticular industry should be unionized and dealt with as a whole, this in accordance with the inevitable evolutionary trend toward combination of all human forces, he was fully aware that, before any such general principle could be rightfully established, unions of labor must assume precisely the same public responsibilities as unions of capital—liability for broken contracts, audited financial reports showing income and expenditures, and government inspection to ensure that no illegal acts were being done. Furthermore, he recognized that there were individuals in the world of labor who were conscientiously determined not to surrender, under present conditions of trades-union control, their personal independence. The time would come when unionism, by the inherent strength of justice in its demands and of righteous methods in its administration, would gather all such waverers into the fold. Meanwhile, it was the law of the compromise, the law of gradual evolution, that there should be no coercion applied. This for the labor extremists might mean the sacrifice of what they deemed to be legitimate recruiting methods, but in the interests of true progress the sacrifice must be made.

Brodie was for the closed shop, but for the closed shop voluntarily accepted, evolved by rational development, not coercively attained. He held that the long-time worker in a plant with which his thoughts, habits, and family interests through the location of his home and the schooling of his children had become identified, had a moral claim to continuous employment—even to a provision from profits when disabled by infirmity or old age. Therefore, any trades-union, in its precipitate anxiety for the ideal of the closed shop, which would throw such old-service men into the street, which would deliberately declare a strike for this very end, were violating the law of the compromise, were retarding the progress of mankind.

Thus Donald Brodie found himself standing squarely

on the middle ground between Mr. Sheldon and the attacking unionist forces. Further considerations impelled him to the side of resistance rather than to that of aggressiveness. He admitted the grave danger of the closed shop without the most complete and effective guarantees of wide-open unions. If unionism claimed the right to represent all labor, it must deny to no laboring man the right of admission to its ranks. The apprentice system in unscrupulous hands was only one of several devices that might operate for closed unions; opportunities for youths to learn honest trades should be extended rather than restricted.

Then again piecework and bonuses for improved processes or economy in the use of materials may be contrary to the idealistic belief that the weaker brother is entitled to the same rewards of labor as his stronger or more gifted brother. But while idealism may be the promised land toward which the hopes of all humanity are directed, the attainment of that promised land is still in remote futurity. Meanwhile in the present imperfect condition of workaday life incentives to individual effort are both necessary and desirable. The men who would forbid everything of the kind are sacrificing the practical to the ideal, are attempting the impossible short cut, and are consequently by the law of evolution retrograding instead of advancing.

Nor could Donald Brodie bring himself to support any movement for the cumulative and nation-wide federation of trades-unions without the accompaniment of wise restraining national laws, such as the Sherman Act, which affords at least some public safeguards against the cumulative and nation-wide federation of capital. In the evolutionary process the time might come for universal consolidation, but the evolutionary moment had assuredly not yet arrived. There was greater safety for all, for workers as well as employers, in cautious delay—in slow, inch-by-inch progress even when the object to

be gained had been demonstrated beyond peradventure to be desirable of attainment.

On the Saturday preceding the Tuesday fixed for the strike at the Sheldon ironworks, Brodie had interviewed Dan Bradshaw and others among the labor leaders. He was earnestly seeking for some compromise that might have been pressed upon Mr. Sheldon in the reasonable hope of his accepting it. But so far from finding the spirit of compromise abroad in the camps of the labor council, he discovered that hearts had been hardened and backs were being stiffened for the coming fray. No mere recognition of individual unions in the Sheldon shops would now suffice; for the purposes of this strike a federation of all the unions affected was being arranged, a representative body was to be elected, and with this single and supreme group of officials Mr. Sheldon would henceforth have to negotiate—such was the declared price of peace. In fact, it was made abundantly clear to Brodie that militant trades-unionism in San Francisco had at last determined to roll their old enemy in the dust of humiliation or break him on the wheel of ruin.

So Donald Brodie, the ardent trades-unionist, defender of the rights of labor, worker for the uplift of toiling and impoverished humanity, could on principle and by reasoned judgment range himself in the present dispute on the side of capital. By doing so he was upholding the law of the compromise with the best chance of exacting obedience to that law from both parties in the quarrel. He was fighting for true progress even though his antagonists in the open might think otherwise or malice-blinded associates like Wilmington should misjudge his motives. Clear to his own conscience, he could remain serenely indifferent both to objurgation and to misrepresentation.

Here in Mr. Sheldon's office, during the very first

hours of the struggle, Wilmington could see this man of strength gaining the virtual leadership for which destiny had so plainly marked him. "I accept your offer, Brodie," the ironmaster had cordially declared, when the proposal had been made to concentrate all available forces on the completion of the one big contract.

"With your permission, Mr. Sheldon," Donald continued, "I'll sleep at the plant. I do not anticipate any violence, but there is too much valuable and easily damaged machinery about to take any chances. We shall keep the arc and incandescent lamps alight both in the yards and in the shops, and no intruders must be allowed within the gates."

"There has never been a big strike yet," observed Wilmington, "without spies and agents from the other side being among the so-called loyalist workers."

"We can look after our own men," replied Brodie coldly. "I have every confidence in the labor leaders—they will neither sanction nor approve any attempt to wreck the plant. But we have to guard against fanatic desperadoes acting on their own account. So I'll sleep here at the works."

"And I will join you, Brodie," exclaimed Jimmy. "We'll put a couple of cots in your room."

"All right," concurred the ironmaster. "Then, Brodie, we'll have your desk brought in here right away—you can share my office."

He touched the buzzer, and a few minutes later several of the clerks from downstairs were wheeling in the desk of the superintendent of labor. Mr. Sheldon himself was issuing instructions.

"Put my desk nearer to that window. There; that will do. Move your chair, Wilmington. You're in the way."

The banker did in all truth feel himself to be in the way, and lost no further time in taking his departure. Henceforth he clearly foresaw that the unions would be

fighting the leadership, not of Richard Sheldon but of Donald Brodie. Wilmington's own secret schemes to secure control of the plant—for Leslie Sheldon's sake, as he had from the first justified himself to himself—would be combated by this man's vigilance and resolute will. As between the two rivals everything was now at stake—love, power, wealth, honor, perhaps life itself. Brodie as yet knew nothing of all this, but Wilmington before he left the room realized what the personal struggle had really come to mean.

The banker had gone his way, and Brodie continued to direct operations, unassumingly and with Mr. Sheldon's complete acquiescence. Jimmy was sent to take charge of the power-house, the reports of the office staff as to volunteers for watchmen's duty were received, night and day guards were told off, beds and bedding, also some canned provisions, were ordered by telephone —all the details of the campaign seemed to come naturally to Donald's hand.

After dinner Mr. Sheldon told the story to Leslie.

"He's a top-notcher, all right!" was his crowning eulogy.

At ten o'clock Leslie rang up Donald at the office to bid Jimmy and him good night, and he fell asleep thinking, not of the labor fight, but of her kindly thought.

CHAPTER VI

DISASTER

For six weeks the strike had continued without notable change in the situation. The struggle between opposing forces had settled down into a silent, determined, unrelaxing strain. A few stragglers seeking work had come into the plant; a few of the original band that had defied the first order to lay down their tools had wavered and eventually gone over to the majority on the outside. The works were closely but peacefully picketed; no newcomer could approach without being met by dissuasive arguments; the stalwarts were subjected to frequently renewed appeals. But the power-house, where Jimmy presided, still kept its battery of oil furnaces burning, and still sent forth through the several channels of supply the steam, electricity, compressed air, and hydraulic power that enabled every piece of machinery in the plant to be operated when required.

Brodie and Jimmy worked by day, and divided watches by night so that one or the other might be constantly on the alert and ready for any emergency. But although rigid surveillance was never remitted, nothing occurred to cause disquietude. The arc lamps high aloft bathed the sleeping plant with light, the incandescents

illuminated every corner of the workshops, there were vigilant guards at all points of vantage. But no lurking form of intruder came into sight.

On alternate nights Jimmy and Donald were off duty from six to ten o'clock. This was their only relief. Donald might dine at his home, but as often as not he with his mother would be at the Sheldon residence. For the ironmaster would have seen but little of him during the busy working day, and this was a convenient opportunity for consultation. Norah and her aunt were usually of the party, but Wilmington had ceased to put in an appearance on the evenings when Donald was expected.

They did not always talk business; it was due indeed both to Mr. Sheldon and to Brodie to give the subject a rest whenever it was possible to do so. Sometimes, too, the ironmaster, after an exacting day at the plant with duties double-banked, was fatigued and would retire early to rest. Thus Donald had an occasional hour of intimate talk with Leslie and Norah.

During the troubled times both the girls had been actively engaged. The strike, indeed, had come just at a period when several schemes for social work among the employees were maturing. It had been Donald's hope that there would have been some form of Christmastide festivity in which all hands, with wives and children, might have participated. The idea had to be given up, for this year at all events, but Leslie and Norah had adhered to the preliminary part of the plan by calling at the homes of employees and making the acquaintance of their families. They had even visited the homes of strikers, and on occasion met some of the men themselves. But they kept clear of all controversy, and endeavored to make their mission exclusively one of friendly interest that the babies and younger children should not undergo needless suffering because of the unhappy dispute.

In this way not a few stories of sickness and hardship

had come to their knowledge, and they had been able to render unobtrusive assistance. But their chief satisfaction was in having carried to completion a veritable coup all unknown to those who were the recipients of their bounty. The strike might be only in its early stages, but already in many homes there was not merely the denial of all luxuries but stinting in actual necessities. The purchase of Christmas cheer in most cases would have been out of the question.

So a confidential order had been placed with one of the big provision stores, and there was not a family among the Sheldon company employees, at work or on strike, but had its turkey, cake and box of candies to help make glad in accustomed manner the season of peace and goodwill to all mankind. A generous deed prompted by a kindly thought! The idea had been Norah's originally. Leslie had at first doubted its wisdom—the gifts, if their source came to be known, might be looked on as an acknowledgment of error or a weak attempt at conciliation. Nor could she disregard the heavy expenditure involved. But Norah had made light of every objection; as regards expense, she had indulged in no more travel de luxe since Jimmy's return, and the money thus saved could not be devoted to happier purpose. So the girls had carried through the plan, with only Aunt Octavia and Mrs. Brodie, Donald and Jimmy admitted to the secret.

Mr. Sheldon had been kept in the dark—he too might have misunderstood, would certainly have pooh-poohed, possibly would have vetoed. The workers wondered. Among the strikers the prevalent notion was that some unknown supporter of their cause had adopted this means of showing sympathy. Some of the women who had met the young ladies guessed differently, but said nothing lest angry animosity might have spoiled the flavor of acceptable fare.

During those evenings, too, there would be talk on

other projects that were counted as merely postponed but not abandoned. Mr. Sheldon had some time before been almost persuaded to put up a luncheon room at the plant, where tables and other conveniences, together with hot coffee, could be provided for those who brought their midday meal. Another proposal that had been urged on the ironmaster was the erection of a bathhouse at the works. Donald held that in every such establishment men should have at least the chance to bathe and change their clothes before starting for home on the street cars, where their presence under existing conditions was sometimes no less embarrassing to themselves than uncomfortable for others.

Then there was an apprentices' club that had been planned, suggested by the newsboys' club at St. Louis, but necessarily on different lines—a place where the lads might meet in their leisure hours for social enjoyment, develop their musical talents, listen to an occasional lecture, foster the spirit of real comradeship, and gain a valuable lesson in self-reliance by running the institution themselves. Neighborhood meetings at which whole families might foregather for recreation and for better acquaintance, such as Donald recalled from Bethlehem days, had also been a mooted subject.

Little things in themselves, but just a beginning of closer relations among fellow-workers, manifesting interest in each other's happiness, leading to interchange of thought, breaking down the barriers of isolation between class and class. Little things, but important things, for the only way to transform existing conditions is for each individual industriously to spade his own tiny patch of the world's garden in placid confidence that, over and above the actual results achieved by his single pair of hands, the example set will prove an incentive to others around him to do the same, so that in the end, with myriads of delvers, the wilderness will at last be made to blossom like the rose.

These matters were no longer mentioned in Mr. Sheldon's presence. Before the strike, he had been inclined to treat them with mild sarcasm; now they caused exasperation. But the others would still talk them over of an evening in the hopeful spirit that achievement would yet come when peace was restored.

At last, despite the many difficulties encountered, the big consignment of machinery for the power-plant in Nevada was completed. During two strenuous days Brodie personally superintended the assembling of the various parts and the careful loading of everything into flat-cars and box-cars which earlier in the week had been introduced into the works by the company's spur line. Now the train of cars was ready for the road, and the yard locomotive next morning would haul it to the railway company's siding, half a mile distant.

But with the coming of the dawn came bitter disappointment. Steam was actually up, and the locomotive coupled to the freight cars, before it was discovered that the track outside had been torn up. During the night switches had been dismantled, rails bent and removed, here and there ties displaced. It had been crowbar work, silently and effectively performed. A single glance along the dismantled roadbed showed that days would be required for its repair. Formalities necessary before commencing work on a public thoroughfare would also cause delay, while it was exceedingly doubtful whether, in face of the opposition of organized labor, any gang of men could be found to tackle the job of making good the damage.

The blow was a facer for Brodie, but he promptly displayed his undaunted resource. Before Mr. Sheldon's arrival at the plant, he had an alternative plan prepared and only awaiting the ironmaster's sanction. The company owned a big barge, the machinery could be transferred to it, and, under cover of darkness, so as

to avoid possible interference, a tugboat could tow the freighted craft across the bay direct to the railway company's yards at Oakland. Mr. Sheldon approved the scheme, and operations were immediately commenced.

The loaded wagons were switched on to the track running out upon the Sheldon wharf. There a big crane was available, and quick work was made in swinging the heavier pieces of machinery wrapped in burlap from the flat-cars and the smaller parts packed in crates from the box-cars into the hold of the barge. By sundown the task was completed, and the men had been strictly enjoined to keep their own counsel outside the plant. A tugboat had been chartered, and was to be at the wharf by ten o'clock.

But a couple of hours before the appointed time it was seen that the barge was sinking at her moorings. The workmen had left, the impending disaster was discovered too late for anything to be done to save the precious cargo, and under Brodie's very eyes the heavily weighted craft went plunk to the bottom of the dock, into twenty feet of water. Jimmy had gone home to dinner; Brodie and a couple of watchmen were the sole witnesses of the disaster.

The man of indomitable will was distressed—in an hour's time the work of more than a year had been destroyed, the strenuous special exertions of the past two months rendered absolutely nugatory, a grievous loss incurred, for it was more than doubtful whether diving apparatus could be secured and salvage operations commenced before serious damage from rusting and silting had resulted to the submerged machinery. Brodie was distressed; for a few minutes also he was dismayed. A stopcock had assuredly been turned open about the time the loading crew quitted work. So there was treachery within the plant as well as the fierce opposition beyond its fences of corrugated iron and barbed wire!

The telephone was useless to explain what had hap-

pened, so the superintendent of labor left his most trusted lieutenant in temporary charge and boarded a car for Russian Hill. It was close on nine o'clock when he arrived. He found Jimmy still at home, in the library with his father, and Wilmington there as well. Donald's unexpected appearance in itself foretold bad news; his agitation was but the prelude of the disastrous story he had to tell. Leslie, on hearing of his coming, had slipped into the room, and was a listener, along with the three men.

At the outset of the recital, Mr. Sheldon's face was grave; by the close, it had turned positively haggard. His comment was brief and without suggestion of censure.

"This is serious, Brodie," was all he said, as deep in thought he began to pace the room according to his custom when mentally disturbed.

Wilmington, however, was almost outspoken in his abuse. That such a loss should have been allowed to occur, when the Sheldon company so urgently needed the big sum of money payable immediately the goods were safe on the railway company's tracks and in the public carrier's custody! Gross carelessness on somebody's part—that was certain!

But Brodie paid no heed to him. He had regained his self-possession—every trace of agitation was gone. His report having been made, he rose to leave.

"I think I had better get back to the plant, sir," he said.

'Yes," concurred Mr. Sheldon. "I don't suppose any good can be done by discussing things further at present."

"I'm coming too, Donald!" exclaimed Jimmy, springing to his feet.

The ironmaster gave the young men a staid good night. But Brodie could not fail to catch the words

that fell from Wilmington's lips before the door of the library was closed:

"Don't you remember my warning, Sheldon? Don't you see now your egregious folly in having so blindly trusted that fellow?"

The door-knob was between Brodie's fingers, and for a moment he hesitated before relinquishing it. But Leslie had followed Jimmy out of the room, and she turned to lay on Donald's shoulder a gently restraining hand. She too had heard the cowardly slander.

"Come," she wistfully appealed. And her eyes were even more compelling than the touch of her hand or the whispered entreaty.

Jimmy had gone to his room to get his tobacco pouch. Brodie and Leslie stood alone on the screened porch overlooking the harbor. For a minute or so they remained silent.

By subtle sympathy the impressiveness of the scene, despite its familiarity, smote the consciousness of both—the moonlit expanse of waters, the dark patches that showed here or there an island, in the far distance the looming blackness of the mainland cliffs and foothills, beneath these like some streaming terrestrial milky way the dim effulgence of the three sister cities strung along the bay, between shore and shore the swiftly moving lights of the ferryboats threading their night courses, the twinkling lanterns of ships at their moorings, beneath their feet and all around them San Francisco itself, a wide-flung blaze of radiance. Into their ears rose the softly blended yet distinctive sounds of the night—the continuous hum of trolley-cars, the frequent hoot-hoot of the ferryboats, the occasional prolonged blare of an ocean-going steamer, even the faintly heard clank of railroad cars being shunted in the freight yards across the bay. Donald and Leslie stood silent, their very silence revealing how deeply the spirit of the scene had entered into their souls.

At last came Jimmy's footsteps and cheery "Come along, old fellow!" to break the spell.

"I am so sorry, Mr. Brodie," she said, as she lingeringly pressed his hand. "But you are brave. You will never allow yourself to be discouraged."

And as he stepped from the verandah Donald felt as if an elixir of fresh hope and determination had been instilled into his tingling veins.

CHAPTER VII

DISTRUST

The president of the Sheldon Manufacturing Company was accustomed to be in his office by eight o'clock almost to the minute every morning. In early life the rule had been enjoined by business considerations; in later years it had been maintained partly from fixed habit, partly as an example of punctuality to subordinates.

But on the day following the accident to the barge Mr. Sheldon was late. It was close upon eleven o'clock before he descended from the street-car at the accustomed crossing about fifty yards from the entrance to the plant. He had always used the street-cars, and he continued to use them now, in proud indifference to the pickets lining the roadway. Hitherto these men had greeted him either with the cold stare of settled enmity or with the sinister smile of sovereign contempt. He had repaid them in kind—had passed along as if utterly unconscious of their presence.

On this particular forenoon, however, there was quite a crowd of strikers gathered before the gateway of the works, eagerly discussing the news that the valuable consignment of machinery had been sent to the bottom of the harbor. At the ironmaster's approach the throng parted, but the usual silence was changed to a babel of

jeering and exultant cries. Brodie heard the uproar from his seat in the office. Rising and glancing out of a window, he witnessed the spectacle of Mr. Sheldon running the gauntlet of insult and abuse.

The ironmaster was pallid from indignation when he stepped into the room, and with a clatter and rattle flung up the roller-top of his desk. At the first glance, Donald Brodie knew that he had to deal with a man of highly overstrung nerves. But according to custom, he drew a chair to the table flanking his employer's desk, setting down in front of him a wire-woven basket containing the important correspondence of the morning, opened and ready for submission to his principal.

Without raising his eyes, Mr. Sheldon acknowledged Brodie's presence by a sharply returned "Good morning." For a minute he continued to sort his papers and pencils, his trembling hand betraying the agitation of his thoughts. At last he pivoted round on his chair, and his eyes met the other's waiting look.

"Have you discovered the miscreant who turned open that stop-cock?" he asked abruptly.

"No, I am sorry to say. I have questioned every man who worked yesterday at the wharf, in the hope of discovering even some mere act of carelessness. But all disclaim any knowledge of the matter, and for the life of me I can attach suspicion to no one in particular."

"How many men helped to load the barge?"

"Seventeen."

"Well, give them their time-cards. Since they conceal the culprit's identity, they are dismissed—one and all."

Donald turned a trifle pale.

"But surely, Mr. Sheldon," he protested, "wholesale dismissal of that sort is an unmerited reproach on the great majority of these men—probably a cruel injustice to sixteen out of the seventeen."

"For God's sake, Mr. Brodie," exclaimed the iron-

master savagely, "don't let me hear anything more about justice or injustice! I'm sick of talk of that kind."

Donald rose to his feet. His look was one of pained surprise. But he spoke in perfectly calm tones.

"You will remember that I was in charge of the loading—that the ultimate responsibility rests on my shoulders."

"I am perfectly aware."

The words were spoken with a quickness and an emphasis that rendered their meaning unmistakable.

"Very good, sir. After I have given these men their time, you will please accept my own resignation."

"Which relieves me from the disagreeable necessity of demanding it!" snapped back the employer, as he turned round to his desk and so signified that the question was settled.

Without another word, Brodie took his hat and left the room. It still wanted thirty minutes of the noon hour, when the whistle would blow for the midday cessation of work. The superintendent of labor went the round of the several departments and handed to each foreman the names of the men who were to be dropped. He softened the dismissal as well as he could; the course of suspending every one who had had access to the barge was absolutely necessary until a thorough investigation had been made.

It was within a few minutes of noon when Brodie found himself in the little office attached to the powerhouse. Young Sheldon instantly read trouble on his comrade's countenance.

"What's up, Donald?" he anxiously inquired.

"Your father has dismissed every man who was at work yesterday on the wharf."

"Holy smoke! Is he going to shut down the whole plant?"

"Perhaps. Who can tell?"

At the very moment the whistle sent forth its shrill prolonged blast. Jimmy left the office to see that the shift of hands was properly made, and that the all-important duties of watching furnaces and engines, the vital throbbing heart of the works, were maintained. Donald waited, listening to the dull roar of the oil-burners through the open doorway.

Jimmy had just returned, when a great shout from a distance smote their ears. Both listened intently for a few moments.

"Do you know what that means?" asked Donald.

"No. What can the row be all about?"

"I should say that the seventeen men who have got marching orders are being welcomed by the strikers. There is a good big crowd this morning outside the gates, and no doubt most of those poor chaps are making the best showing they can—probably putting up a cheer themselves. There may be a traitor in the bunch, but the others have been doing their honest best here. Their hearts must be mighty sore at being turned adrift in such summary fashion. Can you wonder if their first act will be to join the unions?"

"Dad must have lost his senses!" exclaimed Jimmy bitterly.

"His mind has been poisoned, Jimmy. It is Wilmington who has egged him on to this."

"That infernal brute!"

"These men are really made victims because of me. The blow is aimed at me, not at them. Wilmington believes that it was I who sank the barge."

"Oh, what rot, Donald!"

"It's a fact. I too am down and out."

Young Sheldon's look of incredulity gradually changed to dawning comprehension. He seized his coat and hat hanging from a peg on the wall.

"Not by a long chalk. By jingo, I will have some-

thing to say about that! Is my father still in his office?"

But Donald gripped him by the arm.

"Don't be rash, I beg of you, Jimmy. It will only make bad worse. There, take your lunch-box, and come round behind the big oil tank where we can talk unseen and undisturbed."

"Lunch be hanged! Do you think I have any stomach for eating?"

"Well, let's get to a quiet corner, anyhow. I want you to go on with one or two important matters I have in hand. I've been busy on the telephone most of the morning and have gotten track of a diving outfit. Your father gave me no chance to explain about this. But if you push things right ahead, operations can be commenced this very evening, and there should be no difficulty whatever in recovering most of the machinery. Everything will have to be taken to pieces, of course, dried, cleaned and oiled, but if no time is lost in hooking the things out of the water the damage need not amount to anything much more serious than a few weeks' delay."

"But you, Donald—you?"

"Never mind me, Jimmy. Stand by your father. Get this one thing done first, and personal matters can be gone into afterward. Be advised by me, old fellow. Come along where there will be no one butting in while I show you how this diving crew can be secured before the labor leaders get wind of what we are after."

When Jimmy an hour later returned alone to the power-house he found a memorandum on his desk. His father wanted to see him immediately. He went straight to the president's office.

The ironmaster had been nervous in Brodie's presence, but he was severely austere now. All his life the son had been accustomed to listen respectfully and un-

contradictingly to everything his father might have to say. But for this occasion Jimmy had resolutely to school himself to the exercise of restraint over his feelings. He looked serious and was smarting under the sense of wrong to his friend, but by sturdy silence he refrained from adding fuel to smouldering angry fires.

Mr. Sheldon curtly explained the situation. In the history of every strike of importance, as Wilmington had truly pointed out, the unions had succeeded in introducing secret agents among the loyalist hands. There was no means of effectively guarding against this danger. The only remedy when any overt act of destructiveness took place and the actual perpetrator remained unknown, was to make a clean sweep of all and sundry who could possibly be implicated. Any attempt at discrimination would defeat the end in view, for very often the guilty party was precisely the one least likely to be mistrusted. Although there were many gravely suspicious circumstances, he was making no definite charge against Donald Brodie. But until the mystery at the wharf was cleared up the element of doubt remained, and he would have to leave the plant along with the others.

To his father's visible relief, Jimmy attempted no expostulation, but at once turned the conversation to the subject of the diving outfit. The news that such was available threw the ironmaster into a state of excitement, for he admitted that both Wilmingon and himself had been telephoning during the morning to every salvage company in San Francisco without success. But, as the son explained, this diving crew and their apparatus were on board a steamer that had just arrived overnight from Seattle. Their boat was being made ready now under his instructions, and the only other required preliminary was a message to the office of a certain marine broker fixing the terms of remuneration.

The moment Mr. Sheldon understood all this he made

a grab for his phone. The rate of payment was promptly agreed upon, the necessary contract was to be drawn up at once, the boat with its air-pump equipment and crew was to be at the company's wharf by five o'clock, and electric light would be available for all-night operations. The ironmaster, as he hung up the receiver, fairly beamed upon Jimmy. The latter, in accordance with a promise given to Donald, made no effort to place the credit where the credit properly belonged.

But there was a glimmer of the truth in Mr. Sheldon's own mind, for it was he himself who reintroduced Donald's name.

"You may think I have been hard on Brodie, Jimmy. But it is right you should understand exactly how I am placed. You know the heavy capital expenditures that have been made in connection with the shipyards. Well, the necessary finances were secured, two years ago, while you were in St. Louis, by a million-dollar bond issue."

Jimmy gave no sign of surprise. His father was eyeing him curiously from beneath gathered brows.

"You already knew this, did you?" he asked sharply.

"Wilmington spoke about it to Leslie some weeks past, and she mentioned it to me."

Mr. Sheldon was momentarily taken aback. But he made no comment.

"You didn't think of approaching me for further information?" he inquired.

"No. You had plenty other worries. Leslie and I agreed that we could wait until you thought fit to take us into your confidence."

"I see. To be brief, then, Wilmington is trustee for the bondholders, and after what happened last night he point-blank refused to take any further risks with Brodie at the plant. Unless I had acted as I did this morning, there would have been unpleasant legal proceedings."

For a space Jimmy remained silent. Then he asked almost abruptly:

"Dad, will you let me see the documents connected with the bond issue?"

"Certainly," came the ready compliance.

Mr. Sheldon arose and went to a big safe that stood in a corner of the room. Its outer doors were already open. He unlocked the inner ones, also one of the nested drawers, and returned to his desk, a large envelope in his hand.

"Here is a copy of the deed of trust, Jimmy. Read it, and when you remember that interest has for various reasons been allowed to become overdue you'll recognize that I have to work hand in hand with Wilmington if I am not to be put in a tight place myself."

Jimmy glanced at the formidable-looking legal instrument; he saw that its contents would require careful digestion.

"I'm afraid I shall have to tackle this some other time," he said. "I must return to the power-house now."

"Take it along with you. Let me have it back when you're through. I am glad to see that you are interested. As you go out, sound the whistle for Robbins. I am going to put him in charge at the wharf to-night. And I'll come down myself after dinner to make sure that things are going right," he added, after a slight pause.

In the outer office, close to the desk of the chief stenographer, was a carved wooden handle, much like a policeman's staff. It lay snug against the wall, suspended from the ceiling by a leathern thong. At the ceiling this thong was attached to a loop of wire which in turn connected with the factory whistle, a tiny, almost unnoticeable tube protruding high up outside the building and operated by means of steam.

"Mr. Robbins wanted," said Jimmy, as he passed the stenographer's desk.

Three short toots, followed by a longer blast, resounded over the plant.

"Hallo! That's the boss calling me," muttered the foreman of the boiler-shop, recognizing his own particular signal; and the trusted employee of some thirty years' standing hastened away to obey the summons.

CHAPTER VIII

DAWNING LIGHT

That night Donald Brodie returned to long-interrupted enjoyment. He settled down among his books—he disturbed from repose of many weeks one of the volumes of his encyclopedia. Glad to gain surcease from incessant thinking about the plant and the labor struggle, he was reading an article on Shintoism. His mother was quietly sewing, the old work-basket by her side.

Donald raised his eyes from the printed page, and leaned back in an attitude of reflectiveness. After a minute or two he broke the silence.

"I tell you, mother, it's mighty cheap for us Americans to ridicule the ancient ancestral worship of the Japanese. If a boy starts out on life's journey imbued with the religious belief that he must never do anything to disgrace his parents and forefathers, and thus becomes stimulated by noble impulses to add glory to their virtues by displaying emulating virtues of his own, he has a moral equipment of which any civilization might be proud."

Mrs. Brodie looked up and repeated softly:

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

"Which illustrates how closely Shintoism touches Christianity," concurred Donald gravely.

"So that college boy, Kiayama, who does my housecleaning, is trying to please his parents and grandparents and others before them when he tries to please me."

"There you've got it! That's the very spirit of the old Japanese religion."

"Well, he's a credit to it; as tidy and neat-handed as any woman, and sweet-tempered always."

But the conversation was interrupted, for at that very moment there came a ring at the door bell.

A special messenger had arrived with a sealed packet from Jimmy. Wrapped round the big envelope enclosed was a penciled note: "Read over these papers, old fellow. I want your opinion about them. For your guidance let me tell you that nearly a full year's interest is due, and no payment has yet been made to the sinking fund. Let me have the document back first thing to-morrow morning.—J. S."

Donald pushed aside the volume before him, and proceeded to unfold the deed of trust which earlier in the day Mr. Sheldon had confided to his son.

Fifteen minutes or so passed, Mrs. Brodie controlling her curiosity while industriously plying her needle. At last Donald rose to his feet, the paper in his extended hand. His eyes gleamed with excitement.

"See here, mother, that fellow Wilmington has been playing a deep game. He seems to have got the Sheldon company absolutely in his power, and it strikes me he can grab everything for himself and his money-lending associates whenever he chooses to take the final steps."

"What's that, Donald?"

"There has been a million-dollar bond issue secured by the land, buildings, plant and machinery, contracts, book debts, and all other assets in sight. This is a deed of trust in Wilmington's name"—he held the document high aloft.

"Not a mortgage?" asked Mrs. Brodie eagerly.

"Well, it's much the same thing."

"There you are mistaken, my son. We had a mortgage in the early days on the farm in Missouri, but your father would never consent to borrow on a deed of trust."

"What's the difference?"

"With a mortgage past due, property can be redeemed up to a year's time, on payment of the loan and the proper interest. But with a deed of trust the lender can lay his hands on everything, and there is no right of recovery at all."

"Which shows more clearly than ever the dastardly plot Wilmington has contrived."

Mrs. Brodie put away her sewing.

"Let me see the paper, Donald."

"Read this note from Jimmy first, then put the two together. As I make it out, there is six months' interest that should have been paid last July, and another six months' interest just maturing. That makes $60,000 wanted for interest right away, with a first payment of $25,000 to the sinking fund also called for almost at once."

"Lawks me! The interest in default most likely gives the man the right to foreclose immediately. Wheesht now for a few minutes while I make sure of what you're telling me."

Mrs. Brodie adjusted her spectacles, and it was Donald's turn to curb his impatience while she carefully perused the document. He resumed his seat, and gazed before him abstractedly.

"You're right, Donald," she exclaimed, dropping the paper in her lap. "Every single clause is drawn to favor the lenders. They have Mr. Sheldon in a cleft stick. They can ruin him in quick time if the arrears of interest are not paid and the terms of the sinking fund satisfied."

Donald sprang to his feet again.

"Now, mother, while you've been reading I've done

some thinking," he cried. "To whose benefit was it that the machinery shouldn't leave the plant—that it was sunk at the wharf instead of delivery being made? If the railway company had had the goods f. o. b. to-day, $100,000 would be immediately payable to the Sheldon company. There would then have been money available to defeat any foreclosure proceedings."

Mrs. Brodie gazed up into her son's face, her hands clasped together in the intensity of her feelings.

"That thought is like a flashlight from above, Donald," she murmured. Then she rose, and put her hands upon his shoulders. "I believe, my laddie, that you are on the track of a rare piece of villainy, and that you are God's appointed agent to defeat it."

Donald sat down, leaned both elbows on the table, and buried his face in his hands. In this attitude he remained for quite a minute, his mother standing by his side, patiently awaiting the issue of his meditations. At last he raised his head and dropped his hands.

"Yes," he said decisively, "the final fight between me and that man has come. Call it destiny, call it God's will—that's neither here nor there. My duty is clear. He tried to break me once before; he is trying to break me again. It's up to me now to match my strength against his strength, for others' sake as well as my own."

She put her arms endearingly around his neck, and leaned down till her cheek touched his.

"Donald," she whispered, "let me help you. Take the story about these bonds to Aunt Octavia—Miss Carew. She has more money lying idle than she knows what to do with, for during the past twelvemonth she has been made richer than ever by a great oil gusher on lands she owns down at Bakersfield. Even Norah doesn't know—it might turn the lassie's head, her auntie is fearsome. But she has told me all about it. She trusts me in everything, Donald, and take my word for it she will

trust you with all the money needed to get the Sheldons out of difficulty. They would be too proud to ask her help, but between you and Miss Octavia some plan can be contrived that will save them in spite of themselves and defeat that rascal of a banker."

"It is good to know that. But before I go to Miss Carew I shall go to Wilmington. Yes I will, mother. He must know who I am. I'll fight him in the open—I should scorn myself if I tried to fight him in any other way. And before I could ask Miss Carew to stand by me against him—a lifelong friend, remember—she too must know about that Riverside matter."

The mother's fingers stole among the locks of his hair; she gently caressed them.

"But you'll be advised by me on one point, Donald dear. You'll change the order of your program. You'll go first of all to Miss Carew. Then with the sure knowledge that the money's at your back when wanted, you can handle the banker very differently. When he sees that you've beaten him on the trust deed, that you can expose his knavery to everyone, he may think it wiser to sing very small in regard to the other affair."

Donald, disengaging himself from her embrace, rose and faced her. "You don't understand the man, mother. He will be burning for revenge. Besides, how is this going to affect him with Miss Sheldon? You know that they're engaged."

"I know just the contrary," she exclaimed emphatically. "Miss Sheldon has never accepted him."

"Well, he always gave me to understand that the match was a settled thing."

"Another sample of his duplicity! Of course, he wanted you to believe that."

There was a meaning look in her eye, but Donald failed to notice it.

"This may be a terrible blow for her," he murmured.

"Don't you fash yourself on her account, Donald,"

she smartly retorted. "It will be the happiest thing for Miss Sheldon to be free from the man's pestering attentions—the best thing that ever happened in her life to be saved from such a worthless scamp."

"That's true, mother. Wilmington isn't fit to breathe the same air with her. Which is another reason why her father must be rescued from his clutches."

"But you'll go to Miss Octavia first, recollect."

"If it weren't so late, I'd go to-night."

"To-night you'll pray for strength, Donald, to bear your ain burden." In her overflowing mother-love the Scottish dame reverted to the fuller doric of her native land and childhood days, as she always did when strongly moved. "But first thing in the morning you'll gang to Miss Carew and tell her the whole story. And you needna be feart nor ashamed, my ain dear laddie. Lang syne you've made amends for everything that took place that sad time at Riverside. And who could say that your very sin was not for an appointed purpose? The blessed mission bells restored you to your better sel', Donald, and sent you back to me. But they also brought you into the lives o' the Sheldons, and led you here to San Francisco to meet that man again at a time when the good Lord has need o' you for His ain divine ends. Though human eyes are dimmed in the presence of God, I begin to see the hand of Providence working through it all."

The fervor of belief in God and His ways irradiated her countenance, and to her son, gazing at her fondly and admiringly, she seemed like some inspired prophetess of the stern old covenanting days.

CHAPTER IX

AT GRIPS

It was nearly eleven o'clock before the interview between Miss Carew and Donald Brodie terminated. For close on a couple of hours they had been closeted in a luxuriously furnished apartment which its owner was wont to call her office, and where, to justify the name, stood the bureau that contained her housekeeping books, store catalogues, current price-lists and the other literary paraphernalia of domestic economy. She had touched the button for the butler, and the man had entered the room.

"You ordered the landau, Martin?"

"It will be round in a few minutes, ma'am."

"I won't be home until afternoon. Tell Miss Norah, when she gets back, that I shall be detained downtown on business. Most likely she will keep Miss Sheldon with her for luncheon."

The butler bowed to signify that the orders were understood, and awaited her further pleasure.

Miss Carew turned to Donald.

"The girls started off early this morning on a shopping expedition. They are regular inseparables, you know, and have every interest in common. Now, Mr. Brodie, if you will give me a few minutes to get on my hat and gloves, I'll join you downstairs. These are

yours"—she lifted from the desk the trust deed in its envelope and also a folded newspaper, both of which Donald bestowed in the inner pocket of his coat. "Martin will take you to the conservatory, and will show you that wonderful new orchid Norah has just received from Brazil—orchids are the child's latest craze. But I won't keep you waiting long."

After Donald had been ushered from the room, Aunt Octavia lingered. She unlocked one of the drawers of the bureau and took therefrom her bankbook and checkbook. She opened the former, and glanced at the last page of figures. Her face beamed with satisfaction.

"And there was I wondering what to do with the money," was the burden of her musing. "I'm about tired of buying real estate, although real estate is the one thing that never gets away from you, and keeps doubling up in value every little while. If I can only secure those Sheldon company bonds, they will be the finest thing to lay aside as a wedding present for Norah, yes for Leslie, too, when the time comes round. And they will only be safe when they are in the family. I am glad, too, for old sake's sake to do Richard the good turn. And I'm delighted that there can be no more talk now about Leslie marrying that man. I've just tolerated him for years with his airs of superior wisdom and his dogmatic way of insisting on his own opinions. Now, if it were Donald Brodie—— But there, I mustn't allow my mind to be running away with such ideas when there are other things to be attended to."

She placed the two little books in a morocco-leather hand-bag, relocked the drawer, and hurried away.

Donald was listening with courteous although wandering interest to the butler's really intelligent observations on the hybridization of orchids when Miss Carew made her appearance in the conservatory.

"Come along," she said, with a cheery smile. "The carriage is at the door." And leading the way, she

continued: "You see, I'm one of the old-fashioned sort, Mr. Brodie. A pair of fine-stepping horses look better to me than any automobile. Norah prefers her machine, but she is of a generation that takes pleasure in careering at top speed. For myself, I am quite content to jog along slowly and comfortably to the end of the journey."

Having seated herself in the landau, Miss Carew arranged the fur robe over her lap and made room for Donald by her side.

A little later they were being shown into a private waiting-room attached to a suite of offices belonging to a legal firm of high standing.

"Mr. Fern will soon be disengaged," said a young clerk, entering the room and quietly depositing a couple of morning newspapers on the table.

When the youth had departed, Miss Carew smiled.

"He must think that we are pretty tired of each other's company," she said, with a glance toward the journals.

"Or perhaps he guesses that I haven't had time for days to read the news," laughed Donald.

"Oh, well, you're not missing much. Just the usual troubles down in Mexico. But—ah! here comes Mr. Fern."

The lawyer entered, a young man whom Donald now remembered as one among the many to whom he had been introduced on the night of Norah's birthday ball.

After a cordial exchange of greetings with Miss Carew, Fern turned to her companion with hand extended.

"Glad to meet you again, Mr. Brodie."

"Of course," remarked the lady, "I forgot that you were both at Norah's dance. Well, so much the better. I want you two men to become firm friends. Let me explain, Mr. Brodie. Frank Fern's father was my lawyer for thirty years. He has retired now on the ill-gotten gains secured from myself and other unfortu-

nate clients. But Frank has inherited both his father's business and his father's tastes, and is doing his best to pick the bones."

The young lawyer laughed; he had a pleasant, boyish face, and his hearty, care-free hilarity sounded good to Donald's ears. Miss Carew's conversation ambled on:

"And now, Frank, I've something to say to you. Mr. Brodie has a mother—perhaps you met her also at the ball?"

Fern nodded in confirmation.

"Well, as you'll know, then, Mrs. Brodie is just the nicest and dearest old Scotswoman you ever saw."

Donald flushed with pleasure and pride.

"And she and I have come to be close friends—real cronies, she would call it—who like nothing better than to gossip together a whole afternoon. Now, let me tell you one thing Mrs. Brodie has said to me in describing the masterful disposition of her son: 'Everything that Donald says goes.' These are her very words. What do you think about them, Mr. Brodie?"

Donald was now fairly blushing. "Oh, I hope you don't attach too much importance to my mother's utterances," he stammered, in laughing confusion.

"There now, that's a fine remark for a son to make about his own mother. I'll report you, young man. But to return to my subject. I want you, Frank, to take Mrs. Brodie's words literally—everything that Mr. Brodie says to you goes. Do you catch my meaning?"

"Surely," Fern replied.

"Now I wish you and him to go over a legal document. I'll leave you alone for an hour, as I've one or two other matters downtown to attend to. Mr. Brodie knows exactly what I want done, and I'll expect everything to be settled between you by the time I return. Then there will be certain banking business to be fixed. I've brought my check-book, and after we have had lunch, we'll all three go together to the First National

Bank. Yes; you will both lunch with me at the St. Francis Hotel. Any prior engagements must be canceled; I insist on having my own way. Now, get busy, young men. You'll make ever so much more rapid progress without me to bother you. *Au revoir,* meanwhile."

And she was gone.

"Come to my room, Mr. Brodie," said the lawyer, throwing open the side door by which he had entered.

The bank over which Arthur Wilmington presided was in the neighborhood of Montgomery and California streets, and therefore within easy access of Chinatown. A very considerable part of its business was with the Chinese mercantile community.

The hands of the clock pointed to twenty minutes to three when Donald Brodie entered the banking hall. There was the coming and going throng usual toward the close of public business, and for a few moments he watched the hustling scene.

On the left-hand side of the entrance was the president's room, as a gold-lettered inscription told, and through its open doorway the observer caught sight of Wilmington seated at a large flat-top bureau and engaged in conversation with a Chinese comprador standing by his side. But Donald for the present passed along. He proceeded to one of the desks provided for the accommodation of customers and filled up a deposit slip in duplicate. Then he moved across the hall toward the window of a receiving teller and took his place in the line of some half a dozen others. It was several minutes before he came away with the duplicate slip, duly stamped and initialed, in his waistcoat pocket.

This preliminary completed, he made for the president's room. The Chinese clerk, still standing by his principal's desk, was now its only occupant. He was, unlike many compradors in San Francisco, a Chinaman of the old school, wearing pigtail and loose oriental gar-

ments instead of having the American-cut hair and the American-tailored clothes that mark the down-to-date young celestial of the Pacific Coast. In point of fact, Wilmington liked to have Chinamen around him—their meek subserviency accorded well with his domineering temperament; but an Americanized Chinaman was an abomination to his eye and an impertinence to be resented.

"Do you wish to see the president, sir?" asked the comprador, surveying Brodie over the rims of the large round spectacles he was wearing. He was past middle age, and, while his grammar was faultless, pronounced the English words in the precise clipped style that is common with the educated oriental, speaking "with a ladylike accent," as a Chinaman himself has well described it.

Brodie nodded assent to the question.

"Mr. Wilmington has gone to the strong-room, sir. He will be absent for a few minutes. If you are in a hurry, I can take your card to him."

The visitor gave his name in response to the inquiring look and gesture.

The comprador's eyes gleamed with understanding.

"Ah! Mr. Brodie of the Sheldon Ironworks. It affords me great pleasure to meet you."

Donald had not had much experience with Chinamen —he hardly knew whether to resent or be amused at this show of friendliness. But the comprador was smiling pleasantly and still dallying, so some answer seemed to be necessary.

"Mr. Wilmington will know who I am," he remarked politely but frigidly.

"When will the strike at your works end, sir?"

The question was an awkward one, but Donald was certainly not going to explain his changed relations with the Sheldon company to a Chinaman, even though the latter appeared to be on such unusually familiar terms

with his employer that he presumed to play the part of host in his absence.

"I don't know," he replied shortly.

"It is a very bad state of things, all the more if foreign difficulties bring money panic."

The comprador was persistent, which made Brodie all the more determined not to pursue the conversation.

"I shall wait for Mr. Wilmington," he said, dropping into the chair opposite the vacant seat of the president, and pointedly contemplating an etching that hung upon the wall.

A moment later the Chinaman's evident irresolution between going with the message or remaining where he stood was solved for him by the banker's appearance.

The instant Wilmington beheld Brodie coolly seated in his private office without announcement or permission, there shot into his eyes a glare of savage resentment which he was not at the slightest pains to conceal.

"Why are you here?" he demanded, with rude abruptness.

"To see you," replied Brodie quietly, rising to his feet with courtesy that was instinctive although hardly called for in face of such open incivility.

"I am aware that you have lost your job at the Sheldon plant. But just understand right now, my man, that I do not propose to intercede on your behalf."

"Put any thought like that out of your mind. I came to ask no favor of you. My business is of a very different nature."

There was a note of restrained menace in Brodie's tone. His voice, his very words, had a reminiscent ring in Wilmington's ears. But there was no time now for puzzling over the recurring question where they had met before.

"Out with it, then," said the banker peremptorily.

"I think you and I had better be alone, Arthur Wilmington," replied Brodie, resolutely regarding the man

he addressed, then casting a significant glance in the direction of the silently waiting comprador. There was menace undoubted now in the look and in the manner of speaking the full name.

Although the bank president knew it not, he had winced once before under the steady gaze of this same man. He winced again now; uneasy conscience stirred, a vague premonition of coming conflict and defeat oppressed him. His hand was trembling as he held forth toward the comprador the packet of papers he had brought from the strong-room.

"These are what you require, Quong Sing. Get the figures out as soon as possible."

The Chinaman left the room, closing the door behind him.

Over a silken hanging, beyond an adjacent plate-glass partition, Brodie caught sight of the top braids of the pigtail after the comprador had climbed upon what was evidently his accustomed stool. But he did not see a little panel behind the curtain silently drawn—a sliding panel contrived to provide an aperture whereby documents could be conveniently passed from one room to the other, but serving on the present occasion as a means whereby conversation might be unobtrusively overheard.

"We are alone now, Donald Brodie." Wilmington imitated the other in the punctilious use of the full name and in the peculiar emphasis bestowed. "State your business. I have more important matters to attend to."

He sat down and ostentatiously busied himself with a file of correspondence lying on the blotting pad in front of him. Brodie, unbidden, resumed his chair at the opposite side of the broad desk. His imperturbable demeanor was still undisturbed.

"You will think differently before very long," was his composed answer. "But it is my own wish to come straight to the point. You have accused me, I believe, of sinking the barge and machinery."

"You were in charge of the loading operations, weren't you?"

"Certainly."

"Well, the man in charge is responsible until he can show that the responsibility rests elsewhere. That is an elementary law in business. Your dismissal was quite in order."

"Oh, forget about my dismissal, please. That's not the question. I acknowledge my full responsibility as you have defined it. The amount involved is $100,000—lost to the Sheldon firm, or at all events jeopardized. In view of my responsibility, I have just paid in that sum to the credit of the company."

Wilmington gave a sneer of insolent incredulity.

"The fact is as stated," repeated Donald.

"Bosh! Where could you get a hundred thousand dollars—or a hundred thousand cents, for that matter?"

"Where the money comes from is no business of yours. The amount has been paid in. You can go and look at the check for yourself."

"Whose check?"

"Mine."

"Now what damned bluffing game are you putting up? You may have handed in a check, but what is its value with your signature attached, I'd like to know?"

"Face value."

"Poof!"

"This check for $100,000 happens to be certified by the First National Bank of San Francisco, and here is your cashier's receipt for the credit."

The quiet insistence of Brodie's tone rendered it needless for Wilmington to examine the official slip of paper proffered for his inspection. He bit his lip. Uneasiness was returning. How much did this fellow really know? Who was backing him? To fight a penniless mechanic was one thing; but to be up against an adversary who could command financial support to the tune

of $100,000 was quite a different matter. Then there was another thought still more disconcerting. With this money in its treasury, the Sheldon company might slip from his grasp. The first dim indefinable dread of impending defeat was changing to certainty. It was but a sickly smile Wilmington could muster in an effort to mask his agitation and gain a moment for reflection.

The blow had told, and Brodie knew it. He leaned forward, one hand advanced across the desk, his eyes searching Wilmington's very soul with their penetrating scrutiny.

"So for the present," he continued, "I have accepted the responsibility by discharging in full the liability involved. But it is now my intention, as you yourself have suggested, to place the responsibility where it rightly should rest, and that is—on your shoulders, Mr. Wilmington." There was a dramatic pause before these last words, and dramatic deliberation in their utterance.

Again the blow was so sudden and unexpected that the banker visibly reeled under it.

"It was you who instigated the sinking of the barge," added Brodie, pushing home the charge.

An ashen gray was in the other's face, his hands dropped limply by his side. He looked the guilt-stricken and convicted knave. But only for a moment! Quickly the angry blood surged back into the livid visage.

"What the hell do you mean?" Wilmington fairly shouted. "Get out of my office! It is like your damned impertinence to come here with such insinuations."

Cursing and abuse were alike powerless to ruffle Brodie's impassive calm. Motionless and silent, he maintained his fixed regard on the angry, contorted countenance. This cold, prolonged survey brought Wilmington to a white heat of passion. He sprang to his feet.

"Clear out of this!" he cried. "If you don't get a move on, I'll have you thrown out. Do you hear?"

His finger was reaching toward the ivory button at the side of his desk, but something in the other's eyes made him pause.

Brodie too had risen. He receded a couple of paces.

"Before I explain to you, Arthur Wilmington, what I mean by this accusation, I am going to tell you who I am." And without relaxing his steadfast gaze, Donald folded his arms across his breast.

The attitude of the man gave the added touch of reminiscence already suggested by voice and features. Over Wilmington's face stole the light of dawning comprehension.

"Do you remember me now?" demanded Brodie.

"By God! the hobo who stole my purse at Riverside!" gasped the banker, the shock of surprise making vague, indefinable fear once more the predominant emotion.

"Yes, the hobo you tried to railroad to the penitentiary although he had returned to you everything that was yours."

But already the flash of triumph had leaped into Wilmington's eyes; the terror momentarily inspired by unknown danger was gone.

"You infernal scoundrel!" he cried. "Donald Smith you used to call yourself. I remember the name now. Great guns, what a fool I've been not to have identified you long ago! I knew that I had seen your face before —have felt certain of it a dozen times. And you have the nerve to cross my path again? You dare to set foot in my private office? You've had the audacity to get yourself introduced among my friends?"

Brodie, unmoved, uncontradicting, allowed the vials of hate to exhaust themselves. His arms were now unlocked. He stepped forward, rested one hand upon the back of his chair, and with the other indicated the vacant seat opposite.

"Sit down," he said composedly; and Wilmington, as

if under some compelling influence, obeyed. Donald likewise seated himself.

"Now, Wilmington," he began, "it will be best for you to listen quietly to what I have to say. I have told you who I am, for if you persist in fighting me I choose to fight you openly. We shall return now to the question of the barge. You know perfectly well that you are the only one who stood to profit by the disaster."

"Pshaw!"

"It suited your game to block that Nevada contract—to keep the money out of the Sheldon company's treasury at this critical time. For you have been plotting to gain possession of the plant under that iniquitous deed of trust which you hold. It is an old trick in the financial world, but it is not going to succeed on the present occasion. There is money in the bank now to pay the interest in default, the interest maturing, and the called-for contribution to the sinking fund."

During this swift analysis of the situation, the expression on Wilmington's face had undergone several transformations. Blank amazement at the knowledge displayed had been followed by a nervous twitching of features that revealed how the cold scalpel of truth had cut through the calloused cuticle. Then returned the insolence of bravado.

"Who the devil gave you the right to talk like this?" he demanded. "What have you got to do with paying interest or anything else for the company? When Mr. Sheldon learns what you really are, he, like myself, will scorn to touch any money that has passed through your hands, you hobo, you——"

But a warning finger was raised, and further taunting died.

"Your bluster and abuse count for nothing with me," said Brodie. "Your raid on the Sheldon plant has failed, and you know it. Now take your chance to get out of the company altogether. Quit your hold. Behind

me is capital prepared to take over the whole of those bonds at par."

"Whom do you represent, may I ask?" For the moment Wilmington had again become the bank president; he spoke crisply and incisively.

"My principal's name is my affair. The money will be ready. That is all that need concern you."

"Perhaps not. Since you cannot give your alleged principal's name, then you are speaking for yourself alone. And do you imagine I am going to attach any importance to talk from you about taking up a cool million dollars' worth of bonds?" The sneer of studied and defiant insolence had returned. "You can take your fool proposition elsewhere, Donald Brodie, or Donald Smith, or whatever else your name may be."

Brodie still let insult pass unheeded. He rose to his feet.

"So you are quite determined to retain possession of the bonds?" he asked, in a tone of finality.

The question but served as a reminder to Wilmington of the ulterior purpose for which the bonds had been intended. To surrender them would be to surrender Leslie Sheldon—the fight with this man was really for the woman he loved. His rival! His hated and dreaded rival!

But this rival was now shown to be a hobo and a thief! The reflection filled Wilmington's heart with grimmest joy. He had the beggar in the jaws of a steel trap. All else was forgotten—the veiled menace in Brodie's look and words, the discomforting accusation of complicity in the sinking of the barge, the opprobrium with which the trust deed had been assailed. The future could look after its own troubles. For the moment jealousy and hatred reigned supreme.

"You are the last man on God's earth," he hissed, "whom I would ever allow to touch those bonds!"

"Very good."

With these quietly spoken words Brodie turned on his heel and left the room. He had made an effort and failed, but, as he had expected no other result, there remained only the mental satisfaction of duty performed. If he could have brought his adversary to surrender at this stage, humiliation for himself might have been saved, his mother been spared from further distress and shame on his account—shame that was felt, he well knew, although she had never uttered a reproachful word. Even Wilmington would have escaped the public disgrace which exposure of his infamy would entail. Brodie had tried the easy way for all, and been turned back. Now he had to set his face courageously to the painful path strewn with sharp rocks to cut the feet and tangled with thorny vines to lacerate the hands.

Outside Wilmington's room, he became aware that the closing hour had long passed. The banking hall was deserted—only the cashiers and clerks were at work behind the plate-glass partitions. Almost subconsciously he noted Quong Sing, the comprador, seated on his tall stool—he even fancied that the Chinaman's eyes were following him. But a porter in uniform had unbolted the door, and Donald passed out into the open air, his mind already turned to thoughts of the next measures to be devised.

CHAPTER X

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST

"It is very good of you, Miss Sheldon, coming out this cold night. But there are several important things I want to talk over with you and your brother. In the circumstances, I could hardly invite myself to your home. But mother said you would not mind paying her an evening visit, so that is why I phoned to Jimmy."

"That's all right, Mr. Brodie," replied Leslie, disengaging herself from her fur cloak and the silk scarf thrown over her head. "Father is at the dinner of the Engineering Congress to-night, so we were quite pleased to come down the hill."

"Sure!" cried Jimmy, emerging from his overcoat. "I wanted to tell you, Donald, that we're getting most of that machinery fished out of the water."

"That's good. There must be no time lost in overhauling and oiling it, especially the engines."

"Robbins has got a squad of men working all night. Hallo, Mrs. Brodie! It's like old times spending an evening with you." And Jimmy audaciously chucked his hostess of St. Louis days under the chin.

"Well, it's braw to have you back, my laddie."

Although she had accepted his playful familiarity with a good-natured smile, there was a grave and anxious look in her eyes as she relieved Leslie of her wraps and settled her in the most comfortable rocker. Donald

stood beside the table that occupied the center of the room, a little bundle of papers in his hand. After he had motioned Jimmy to a seat by his side, he himself sat down. Mrs. Brodie had drawn her chair close to Leslie's. There was a subdued sense of expectancy that momentous things were to be discussed. All eyes were turned on Donald.

"I want to begin," he said, "with this matter of the deed of trust." He drew the instrument from its envelope, but did not unfold it. "Here it is. I am going to return it to you, Jimmy, to-night."

"You have gone over it, old man?"

"Every word, and so has mother, who possesses a shrewd knowledge, far better than my own, about these things. But I have done more; I have taken the liberty of getting the opinion of a capable lawyer. And he concurs with us in holding this to be an unnecessarily stringent document, and therefore an unfair one, drawn almost exclusively for the protection of the bondholders as against the owner of the plant. I am in a somewhat awkward position, Miss Sheldon; I do not wish to appear to you to be attacking Mr. Wilmington, who, as trustee for the bondholders, presumably drew this agreement. But in your father's interests and for his future protection I am prepared to state the facts as I see them, if it is your pleasure to listen."

"I beg of you to be perfectly frank," replied Leslie. "I want to know every detail about this matter. Jimmy and I had determined to investigate for ourselves if we had not secured your assistance."

"Well, in the briefest terms, Mr. Sheldon has put himself absolutely in the power of the bondholders. Owing to the interest being six months overdue, legal proceedings could be commenced to-morrow—even redemption of the whole bond issue could be demanded, because the terms of the onerous contract have not been observed."

"Just as I read it!" exclaimed Jimmy bitterly.

"Unless your father found immediate financial backing to the full extent of this indebtedness, his equity in the company could be wiped out by legal process within ninety days or thereabouts."

"His equity?" queried Leslie. "What exactly does that mean?"

"Well, in other words, unless the whole million dollars, as well as the interest, were forthcoming at the public auction ordered by the courts, his rights of ownership in the plant could be confiscated. The bondholders would take possession of everything."

Contrary to Donald's expectation, Miss Sheldon received this plain and forcible statement of the situation without manifesting surprise or discomposure.

"Mr. Wilmington himself warned me about this some time ago," she explained. "But he represented that any possible trouble would come from the general body of the bondholders, and not from him. He would always stand between them and father for my sake and for Jimmy's as well."

Young Sheldon gave an ironical grin.

"Much he cares for me!" he muttered.

Brodie reflected a moment before resuming:

"Of course, I cannot tell how many others may be interested in the bonds besides Wilmington. But this I do know—that he acts and speaks for all, and therefore is in absolute control. To-day he was offered the full face value of the bonds, and turned down the deal instantly and without consulting any one but himself."

"Oh, he's a downy duck!" commented Jimmy. "You may take it from me that he owns the whole caboodle."

"Well, it really doesn't matter, for let me tell you right now that there is no longer anything to fear in regard to this bond question. Money to meet the interest and sinking fund payments is in the bank, and friendly capital stands ready to take up the entire issue just so soon as Wilmington is disposed to quit his hold."

Amazement, joy, and thankfulness were all showing on Leslie's face. In the surge of emotion she clasped her hands.

"Oh, I am so glad to learn this!" she exclaimed. "The worry is killing father by inches. I can see it, although he is too proud to speak to me of his troubles."

Jimmy, too, looked surprised.

"Friendly capital, Donald? Who is the accommodating party?"

"Oh, there is no accommodation," replied Brodie. "It is a thoroughly sound investment."

"Don't tell me that, with a big labor struggle on our hands."

"Well, the struggle won't last forever."

"No, but it may break us before we see the end."

"I don't think so, Jimmy. With this complication about the bonds removed, there should be no real difficulty in arriving at a settlement. In point of fact, I've come to the belief that the bonds have been the cause of the strike. I may not have exact proofs yet, but to me the logic of events is sufficiently convincing."

"In what way?"

"This bond issue was put through two years ago, money was lavishly spent in the new equipment, even profits were diverted into further expenditures on capital account, arrears of interest were piled up, and then, just when things had been brought to this critical pass, the labor quarrel with your father, staved off for years, was precipitated."

Leslie was listening in round-eyed astonishment. Jimmy leaned forward eagerly.

"Just to tangle up the old man?" he questioned. "Then to foreclose at the proper moment and rob him of everything?"

For confirmation of these surmises he searched the other's face. But Donald, although his eyes did not flinch, remained silent.

"Is that how you've read it?" pressed Jimmy.

"It may seem a terrible accusation to make," replied Brodie gravely, "but that is precisely the opinion I've arrived at."

A pained look came into Leslie's face, her eyes filled with tears. She turned away, and to hide her distress leaned against Mrs. Brodie's shoulder.

"I see it all," she murmured, in broken accents. "I need no further proofs. Now at last I understand things I could never understand before."

Mrs. Brodie with gentle sympathy patted the young girl's arm. Her woman's instinct divined the cruel pressure Wilmington had brought to bear in forcing his love by threats of financial ruin for her father.

"Don't give way, Miss Sheldon," urged Donald. "Happily, all this danger is past. The plant is safe. Your father can now make his position perfectly secure."

"Who are our friends?" asked Jimmy. "You haven't told us that yet."

"Nor can I for the present. I am under a pledge of confidence. It must be enough for me to tell you that the capitalist who stands behind me is absolutely satisfied as to the security of the investment, and believes peaceful and prosperous times to be ahead for the Sheldon company."

Mrs. Brodie came to his support.

"You see, Jimmy, there are folks in San Francisco who already know Donald and are prepared to trust his judgment to the limit. When he says the investment is right, they know it is right, and there's an end to the whole transaction."

Donald accepted this argument with an indulgent smile.

"Well, let it go at that, Jimmy, for a time at all events. There are other things to talk over. Wilmington has accused me to your father of being responsible

for the sinking of the machinery at the wharf. But if my supposition is right, it is he who is responsible—not directly, perhaps, but indirectly as the man who has found it to his personal advantage secretly to foment this bitter fight. Now to-day he defied me to clear myself by producing the guilty party."

Leslie looked inquiringly.

"Yes, Miss Sheldon," continued Donald, interpreting her mute question, "I had an interview with him this afternoon at his bank. He put that challenge squarely up to me, and I am going to take him at his word. I will spare no effort to get at the truth of things—to secure the proofs of what I have already called the logic of the events themselves. But this brings me to another matter"—his voice took a note of deep sadness—"and for me a very painful matter. As I would never fight any man except in the open, I have this afternoon disclosed to Wilmington a certain episode in my life which I am now going to tell to you. This I do partly for my own self-protection, for he will undoubtedly distort the facts so as to injure me and destroy my usefulness to the utmost of his power."

Donald's tone and manner had grown subdued, yet he held himself with proud dignity. No one sought to interrupt, and he proceeded:

"Miss Sheldon, I have no right whatever to intrude my personal affairs upon you—no reason to suppose that you can be interested in them except in so far as I am your brother's comrade and friend. And nothing I am going to say will, I think, disturb that comradeship."

He extended a hand along the table to Jimmy, and the latter affectionately clasped it in both his own, retaining hold while Donald went on:

"Indeed, Jimmy will now see things in a clearer light than before, although perhaps he has already guessed at the truth from the many hints I have purposely given him. As I have often said and firmly hold, a man's

past is his own—it belongs to himself and to no one else. But there may be a time when it is best that he should speak frankly to others, and that time for me has come."

Leslie was still leaning back and resting her head against Mrs. Brodie's enfolding arm. Her face was pale, her lips were parted in wonderment. But she spoke no word.

"Let them read the newspaper, Donald," suggested Mrs. Brodie, in a low voice that trembled with both pity and appeal.

"Presently, mother dear. But first of all I must explain." He no longer looked at Miss Sheldon, but turned to her brother. "Jimmy, there was a time when I drank just as badly as any man you have ever known. I was deep down in the mud of self-abasement—a regular hobo."

"It was only for a brief spell," pleaded Mrs. Brodie, in tearful extenuation; "only for a few months, Miss Sheldon, when he ran awa' frae his hame. And it was I mysel' who was maist to blame for that. He had aye been a well-behaved laddie afore, but when a' of a sudden, sae to speak, he took to late hours and drinking ways I rated him severely instead o' trying to bring him back gently to better habits. Oh, if it wasna for the great good that has since come oot o' everything I wud never hae forgi'en mysel', never, never."

It was Leslie who was the comforter now, who put an arm around Mrs. Brodie's neck, and nestled still closer to her side.

"No, no, mother," protested Donald. "It is just like you to take the blame on yourself. But there was no excuse for me, none whatever. During full six months I roamed about the Colorado desert, and then into Southern California, drinking all the while. And once when I was crazed with whisky and weak from hunger I yielded to a sudden temptation. I took a man's purse—yes, I stole it, although I returned it intact to its owner.

But it was drink and drink alone that robbed me of my senses and made me capable of such an action."

"Good God!" murmured Jimmy, in sorrowful amazement. But he gripped Donald's hand tighter than ever, and bent down so that his forehead touched it.

"I knew you wouldn't be hard on me, Jimmy," said Brodie gratefully, his eyes filming with tears.

"Hard on you!" cried Jimmy, raising a drawn, white face. "Who am I, to be hard on you—you who saved me from disgrace and moral ruin, and made a man of me?"

"Ah, yes, Jimmy! But there was no comparison between anything you did and what I had done."

"But what might I not have done next? I was just at that stage when I was ready to pawn my very soul for more drink. But there, we'll forget all that misery. It is over and done with. Out of the misery comes our friendship. Brothers for life, more than ever—that's how we stand, Donald." And again he wrung his benefactor's hand.

Silent witnesses of this touching manifestation of love and sympathy between man and man were Mrs. Brodie, down whose cheeks unheeded tears were still coursing, and Leslie Sheldon, gazing in half-comprehension of what it all could mean.

"But let me finish," resumed Donald. "I did this shameful deed at Riverside nearly four years ago."

"The time you heard the mission bells?" queried Jimmy eagerly.

"Yes, the time I heard the mission bells that brought me eventually back to my manhood. And there is yet another thing to be told. The one from whom I took the purse was Arthur Wilmington."

"Wilmington!" gasped Jimmy, while Leslie grew even a shade paler.

"Yes. But until I revealed my identity to him to-day he had never associated me with that broken-down and

disreputable hobo whom he had tried so hard to get thrown into a penitentiary. Folsom or San Quentin was the only place for me—that's what he insisted. But a merciful judge thought otherwise, and saved me from that ignominy—for my poor dear mother I was saved."

Donald's voice was at last broken with emotion. He leaned an elbow on the table and covered his quivering features with his hand. He was quietly sobbing now.

But Jimmy had sprung to his feet; his arm was thrown across his comrade's shoulders.

"Quit it, Donald, quit it! That good old judge saved you for your mother, thank God! And he saved you also for me. Can I forget that? Not as long as I live, my dear fellow."

Brodie arose, but he kept his face averted, his eyes downcast on the table. His fingers toyed with the papers lying there.

"Excuse me, Miss Sheldon, for a little time. Here is a newspaper which pretty well tells the whole story, for it quotes in full the remarks made by the judge when he gave me my freedom and the chance to redeem myself. Will you and Jimmy read it, please? I want you to—that is why I have it here." He indicated a neatly folded journal, evidently a small local print, by pushing it to one side. Then he looked up. "I have said enough. So if you don't mind, I will take a little turn outside. I'll be back in half an hour."

And Donald left the room.

When he returned it was to receive the welcome of cheerful faces and pleasant words. Leslie took the lead; she advanced toward him with outstretched hand.

"Mr. Brodie, we are not going to say anything more about that painful incident. It is gone and past, and is to be forgotten—or, if it is to be remembered at all, remembered with gratitude by Jimmy and me, for it

brought you into our lives. And just think of all you have done for us since, both in St. Louis and here."

"You are too kind," murmured Donald, deeply moved by her sincere cordiality.

"No, no; we can never be grateful enough. And let me tell you, Mr. Brodie," she went on, with intense earnestness, "I am one of those who believe in the divine objects of sin. By sin and atonement for sin the noblest attributes of character may be developed. The one who has never sinned can never gauge the deep sorrow of sin—can never have the truly sympathetic heart for his sinful brother or sister."

To Donald came the vague reflection how close in harmony were her sentiments with his own; once again, as on several previous occasions, she seemed to be giving utterance to the very thoughts that were nearest to his own heart.

"You are right," he concurred softly. "Sin was made for man, not man for sin."

They resumed their seats. Jimmy's hand was on Donald's shoulder.

"And look how the experiences you came through have benefited others," he said. "While you've been out, your mother has been telling us a few things, among them the story of a student in the college chapel who came and sat beside the solitary hobo, and gave him the brotherly hand of encouragement. So that's where you first learned your favorite maxim—get down to the level of the man below. It was that college boy's grip you passed along to me, Donald."

Brodie remained silent for a moment. When he spoke he glanced at Leslie.

"Yes, Miss Sheldon, until those times I had always thought that the only proper thing for a man to do was to strive to reach the level of the men above him—intellectually, morally, socially, financially, or in any other

respect. It is the doctrine that every Sunday-school teaches."

Mrs. Brodie was watching him. He intercepted the look of anxiety in her eyes.

"Oh, I am not quarreling with Sunday-schools, mother, nor with the doctrine itself, for that matter. It is all right in its way. But few realize how much nobler it may be to get down to the level of the man below—to try and understand him, discover his longings and aspirations, make him feel your sympathy, and by the power of loving-kindness raise him a little out of the depths. That's what others did to me in those days—the preacher who put his arm round me and led me into the chapel, the brave college lad who left his companions to sit by my side, a rancher and his wife who next day placed me at their table, the judge, the sheriff, the probation officer, the lawyers—God, I never knew until then there was so much goodness and willingness to help in the world!"

"And the Reverend Dana," prompted Mrs. Brodie. "My certy, but he proved himself a grand man! He has visited us since we've been here, Miss Sheldon, and he thinks the world of Donald."

His voice came softly—vibrant with affectionate reminiscence:

"Surely, surely, mother dear; I was coming to him. To crown all were good John Dana and dear old Bethlehem—the trust reposed in me there so that I might regain my own self-respect, the helpful tasks I was permitted to perform, the generous pretense that I was indispensable from the very day I began to perform them."

"Just as you made me believe at the newsboys' club," laughed Jimmy.

Donald smiled.

"Well, Jimmy, the lesson was all right for both of us. The first thing to do for a man who thinks he is down

and out is to show him how he can still be of service to his fellowmen. Helpfulness to others brings him back to hopefulness for himself."

"That's true, and no mistake," enthusiastically exclaimed Mrs. Brodie. "When Donald talks like that, Miss Sheldon, I can almost——"

But Donald gave her no chance to go further.

"What about a cup of tea for Miss Sheldon?" he interposed, with an admonitory shake of his head.

"Oh, thank you, no; it is too late. Come along, Jimmy. We must hurry home, Mr. Brodie," she explained, "for we want to catch father when he returns from the banquet."

"That's so," concurred Jimmy, following her example by rising to his feet. He glanced at his watch. "By jove, it's past ten o'clock! As sis says, Donald, we're going to have a good long talk with dad to-night, before that beggar Wilmington can get in any more of his dirty work. I've got the deed of trust in my pocket, and am taking the Riverside paper as well. That judge was the right sort—just bully! There you are, Leslie; tuck that scarf better under your chin. Good night, Mrs. Brodie. Good night, old man."

CHAPTER XI

THE BOMB THAT FAILED

On Mr. Sheldon's desk, next morning, lay a letter marked on the cover as personal and therefore left for his own hand to open. But when he had taken it from the envelope he found that the communication was addressed to him officially as president of the Sheldon Manufacturing Company. It read as follows:

"I beg to inform you that yesterday the sum of $100,000 was placed to the credit of the company's bank account. In case you may consider this an unwarrantable liberty on my part, I wish to explain that I am acting on behalf of capital which is prepared to take up the entire bonded indebtedness of the company if the opportunity to do so is afforded, cancel the existing deed of trust, and replace it with an agreement of a less onerous character; among other things, suspending the payments to sinking fund and reducing the interest to five per cent. per annum. To facilitate such a readjustment, the above-mentioned sum is put at the disposal of the company, so that all immediate obligations under the trust deed can be paid off and possible complications thereby removed.

"Should the proposal not meet with your approval, the $100,000 can be refunded from the payment that will fall due when the Nevada power-plant machinery

is delivered f. o. b. to the railway company, or at your option it may be treated as a personal loan to you without security for twelve months at six per cent. The latter offer in itself proves that the capital interested is friendly both to you individually and to the company. In return, you have it in your power to exert your influence to bring about a sale of the bonds on equitable terms. I would state for your information and guidance that a tender at par value has already been made to the trustee, Mr. Arthur Wilmington, but has been declined by him.

"In conclusion, I would ask your forbearance in not pressing for the name of my principal at the present time.

"Respectfully submitted,

"DONALD BRODIE."

Seated alone in his room, the ironmaster read this letter over and over again. His conversation late the previous night with Jimmy and Leslie had prepared him for something of the kind. He was therefore not taken by surprise because of the large and opportune deposit at the bank. He was merely wondering who could be the unknown friend standing by him so generously and courageously at this critical time.

For several minutes, the letter still in his hand, he sat and mused.

"Yes, by Heaven," he at last murmured to himself, "I believe that must be the explanation. There are business men in San Francisco who are determined that in this struggle for freedom of contract old Dick Sheldon shall not be downed. They recognize that I am fighting the fight of vested capital not only here but in every city on the coast."

With this proud thought in his heart, and renewed fire of combat in his eye, he closed down his desk and started on his usual morning round of the works.

An hour later he returned. He was satisfied with things in a way, but not too well satisfied. The machinery rescued from the bottom of the dock was under process of overhaul in the several shops. But progress was slow; there seemed to be some lack of cohesion between the various departments; the number of hands, already inadequate, had appreciably dwindled that very morning, thereby increasing the gaps caused by the wholesale discharges two days before.

It was Donald Brodie who was being missed—the directing brain that combined the comprehensive grasp of things, the ability to bring about coördinated results, with the subtle indefinable power of securing from men the full measure of their activities, imbuing them with a desire to show individual excellence of workmanship, stimulating them with the general spirit of wholehearted loyalty that counts for so much in the successful operation of every big manufactory.

Yes; it was already manifest that things were not the same with Donald Brodie absent—that difficulties would increase day by day, that the heavy burden of anxiety for Mr. Sheldon would speedily grow heavier still. This was the very thought in the ironmaster's mind when Wilmington entered his office. It was the usual hour for him to call—nine o'clock, before the banking day had commenced.

There was an air of restraint on both sides, a guardedness of conversational approach, but otherwise no marked difference in the accustomed greetings. One or two minor matters had been mentioned, when Sheldon laid hold of Donald Brodie's letter.

"Read this," he said, passing it to the banker.

Without a word, the latter complied.

"Well?" he remarked interrogatively as, the last line perused, he handed back the paper.

"Don't you think it would be good business to accept this offer?"

"Which of the offers?"

"For the commutation of the bonds, of course."

"The owners may not want to sell. The bonds have still eight years to run."

"Yes; but you know quite well they wouldn't realize par on the open market to-day. It seems to me a mighty good thing for the bondholders, as well as for the company."

"Oh, industrial bond investments take no heed of market fluctuations. The ultimate security is ample."

"I agree with you there," said the ironmaster drily.

"And times will change—troubles come to an end," added the banker, with a complacent smile.

"Well, so far as I am concerned, Brodie's proposition relieves my mind of one great anxiety. I have already instructed the secretary to prepare checks for the interest and sinking-fund payments."

"So you are really going to borrow the money put up by that man?" asked Wilmington, face and voice both displaying profound surprise.

"Why not? I should be a fool to let such an opportunity go by."

"Then, Sheldon, I have a painful duty to perform. I must tell you who Donald Brodie really is. I discovered the truth only yesterday, when I forced him to admit his identity."

But the ironmaster leaned forward, a steely look in his eyes, in his voice the ring of cold and stern rebuke:

"Now, Wilmington, take my advice and stop right there. I happen to know of that unfortunate episode down at Riverside. But I have also read the judge's summing up of the case, and all I can say is that to my mind Donald Brodie left the court exonerated and with head erect, while it was the man that prosecuted, or rather persecuted, him who should have been thoroughly ashamed."

Wilmington collapsed in his chair; for a moment he

looked limp and flaccid. But with a flush of anger mantling his face he quickly drew himself together again. His reply came with offended dignity:

"You certainly amaze me, Mr. Sheldon, when you can treat a deliberate act of theft so lightly."

"Well, keep your own opinion about that and I will keep mine. What man exists, I'd like to know, who hasn't something in his life that he wants buried and forgotten? Answer me that, Wilmington."

No reply was attempted, and the ironmaster proceeded in kindly tone:

"I wish no quarrel with you, Arthur. We have been too long associated in business matters to come to loggerheads now. And if I am going to be just to Brodie, I have also been just to you. It has come to my ears that you have been giving me the double-cross in this strike affair. But I have treated the idea of such a thing as not worth a moment's serious thought."

Wilmington had moved uncomfortably; the red on his cheeks had died away. He appeared as if he were swallowing a lump in his throat.

"Good God! What nonsense have you been listening to?" he managed to articulate.

"Exactly. Nonsense, incredible nonsense—that's what I called it, and that's how I am going to treat it."

"May I ask who has been my slanderer?"

"Well, there is no harm in telling you, for he makes the charge quite openly. It is Donald Brodie."

"I guessed as much. Expose an impostor like that, and calumny of course becomes his readiest means of getting back at you."

"But don't forget that you impute to him precisely the same bad faith when you try to make me believe that it was he who sank the barge. However, these mutual recriminations are no longer going to influence me against one or the other. You can adjust your differences between yourselves. If you work with me, Wil-

mington, good and well; if Brodie works with me, good and well. That is all with which I am concerned."

"Then you are bringing him back into the plant?"

"I am most certainly going to try to get him back. Last night at the Engineering Congress dinner it was first one and then another who was sounding his praises —telling me that Brodie is the coming man in San Francisco in our line of business, and congratulated me on having him in the Sheldon company's employ. Good Lord, I had to hold my breath! If a whisper got out that Brodie was looking for a job, there would be a dozen firms chasing after him in a jiffy. Yes, sir; I'll count myself lucky if he accepts my apology and comes back."

Wilmington smiled contemptuously. His glance strayed in the direction of the letter lying open on the desk.

"Of course, when the fellow brings a bunch of money into the business he will naturally expect to be restored to favor. But as I said from the first that you would regret taking him out of the shops into the office, I say now that you will regret accepting any financial assistance at his hands. There is a mystery about that hundred thousand dollars which I don't like."

"But a substantiality about it that appeals to me mightily," laughed the ironmaster. "And for Brodie to be made the medium of putting such a sum at my disposal is a pretty good indication of the esteem in which he is held in influential quarters. As to the offer itself, I take that as a strong endorsement of the policy I am striving to uphold—the just rights of capital against the unjust demands of labor. Over and above the material aid afforded, this moral support comes at a very fitting time."

Wilmington rose to depart. He was not inclined to prolong the discussion. The bomb he had come so confidently to explode had proved the direst of fizzles. His

enemy had not only regained his lost ground, but was more strongly entrenched there than before. Moreover, it was Brodie now who was taking the aggressive. More than ever Wilmington felt oppressed with the vague sense of unseen irresistible forces closing in and crushing down upon him. He required time to think—time to contrive new plans in face of new developments.

"Well, I must be going," he said.

"Will you take those checks along with you?"

"As you choose," he replied indifferently.

"Wait, then, until I get them for you." Sheldon touched the buzzer. "And allow me to suggest your calling a meeting of the bondholders to discuss the offer made."

"Well, we can talk of that later on," said Wilmington absently.

He was thinking of Leslie Sheldon—it was on the one word to be spoken by her lips that all the future issues would depend.

CHAPTER XII

DENOUNCED

Donald Brodie with characteristic energy had lost not an hour in commencing the quest for proofs of Wilmington's duplicity. While the banker and the ironmaster were in consultation, he was busy among the strikers. Many of the men had been on terms of friendly intimacy with him before the struggle began. They remained friendly disposed still, for labor in revolt recognizes that the officers of a company attacked are in duty bound to stand on the employer's side, fighting their best if extremists themselves, or using their moderating influences if men of moderate views.

Immediately after breakfast, Brodie repaired to the home of a pattern-maker named Alick Forsyth, one of the minor leaders among the unionists, sincere in his convictions and both pugnacious and pertinacious in upholding them. Forsyth was a Scot, and Brodie, with the same blood in his veins, knew that he could get closer to him than to anyone of other race.

The interview proved to be a veritable revelation. When the situation came to be discussed, Brodie found that the pattern-maker based his confidence of sweeping victory for the cause of organized labor precisely on the fact that the Sheldon ironworks was under a heavy bonded indebtedness, that the company was in such des-

perate financial straits that it could not pay accumulated arrears of interest, and that it was only a question of a few weeks longer at most when the bondholders would foreclose, clear Richard Sheldon out of the management, and restart the plant in full operation under entirely new conditions. "When once we are quit of that thrawn old devil," Forsyth had forcibly expressed it, "we'll get everything we want—make no mistake about that, Mr. Brodie."

Brodie knew well the care with which the labor organizers gather their facts and mature their plans before venturing on a strike campaign. He was not surprised, therefore, that the fact of the plant being bonded should be within their cognizance; they had only to go to the county recorder's office to see the actual deed of trust. But knowledge of interest in default could have emanated only from company headquarters, while the confident forecast of the bondholders' intentions must have been inspired. Whose was the hand behind the scenes holding the cords and manipulating the pulleys? Surmise was not proof, but the logic of events as already interpreted by Brodie received convincing confirmation.

He met half a dozen other fairly representative men besides Forsyth. Everywhere was the same resolute hopefulness founded on the same positive belief that Richard Sheldon's day of financial reckoning was at hand, and that with his passing the triumph of the strike movement was assured.

It was four o'clock when Brodie returned home—he had promised to join his mother over her favorite cup of afternoon tea. With the sound of his latch-key she met him at the door.

"Come into the dining room for a minute," was her greeting. "There's somebody waiting to see you in the parlor. But maybe you'd first like to read a letter that has arrived by special messenger from Mr. Sheldon."

Donald ripped open the envelope and read the following words in the ironmaster's own handwriting:

"My dear Brodie:

"I owe you an apology, and if you will accept it shall be glad to have you back at your old post tomorrow morning. Please come and dine with us tonight, and bring your mother with you. The invitation is from my daughter as well as from

"Yours very truly,

"Richard Sheldon."

The letter was passed to Mrs. Brodie. Her eyes lighted up with joy.

"I knew that everything would come right!" she exclaimed, with fervent thankfulness, throwing her arms around her son and kissing him on the forehead.

"Now, who is waiting for me, mother?" asked Donald, gently releasing himself.

"You'll be surprised to hear that it's a Chinaman."

"A Chinaman?"

"Yes; but you'd hardly believe it at first sight—such a nice-looking young man, with his hair properly cut, and dressed just like an American. And he talks fine, too; he was born in this country, he tells me, and is a graduate of Harvard University. What do you know about that!"

"Well, let me see what he wants. You can be putting on the tea-kettle."

But it was nearly an hour before Donald emerged from the parlor, and, conducting his visitor to the outer door, bade him a courteous good evening.

His face was grave with thought when his mother appeared from the kitchen carrying the belated tea-tray. He followed her into the parlor, and drew his chair close to the little rattan table that was used on such occasions.

"What has it been all about, Donald?" she asked curiously.

"Well, mother, to a certain extent I'm pledged to secrecy. I am not allowed to divulge the exact sources of my information. But I have surely the proofs now that Wilmington has been acting all along in collusion with the labor leaders."

"You don't say!"

"And that it is all a pretense about there being other bondholders than himself. He had some help at first, but has gradually taken over the entire issue. So all his manipulations have been for his own selfish interests and his own devilish ends. My God, what a story of perfidy!"

"Aye, but he has surely been diggin' the pit for his ain downfall," she murmured.

"Well, mother dear, we'll say no more at present. I want to have a quiet hour to think over things before we start for the Sheldons. We mustn't be later than half-past six, remember. Now I'll take that cup of tea, thank you."

Recalled to her duties, Mrs. Brodie removed the cosey from the old silver teapot.

Donald and his mother had ascended the hill arm in arm. At the street-car corner they encountered Mr. Sheldon and Jimmy, on their way home from the plant. The cordial handgrip the ironmaster gave to Brodie told more than words.

As they approached the house, Brodie noticed an automobile standing at the gateway, and recognized it as Wilmington's. He compressed his lips but made no comment.

Within the house Wilmington was just on the point of taking his departure. A long interview with Leslie had reached its termination. They were in the recep-

tion hall. Both their faces showed traces of deep agitation.

"So that is your unalterable decision, Leslie, is it?" he was saying.

"Absolutely, Mr. Wilmington," she replied, in a low voice but very firmly. "I realize now that I have never really loved you. And even for the gift of all those bonds I could not love you—the very offer has made the thought more impossible than before."

At this moment there came the sound of footsteps and voices on the verandah. The front door opened, and the party of four entered.

For a few seconds embarrassed silence followed, broken at last by Mr. Sheldon with a commonplace, "Hallo, Wilmington!"

The banker bowed, and would have passed on his way, but Donald blocked the exit.

"A word with you, please," he said decisively, "if Miss Sheldon will permit. It can be spoken now as well as at any other time."

Wilmington's face turned deathly pale, more from anger than from fear. He eyed his antagonist as if taking his physical measure. Both were remarkably handsome, each in his own particular style. But the man of finance looked slow and ponderous contrasted with the alert and vigorous yet reposeful figure confronting him.

"I wish to have nothing to do with you," was the surly reply.

"After to-night, precisely my own desire. But before we part there are one or two things I have to tell you—right here in the presence of Mr. Sheldon. It was you who organized the strike in collusion with Dan Bradshaw, the labor leader. On the night of January ninth two years ago you paid him at your rooms the sum of ten thousand dollars to keep the unions from striking. That was when the bond issue had just been

arranged and the company had the proceeds intact in its treasury. On the seventh of January last year at the same place you paid him the same amount and for the same reason—it still suited your plans that peace should be maintained. But on November ninth you handed over twenty-five thousand dollars as a first instalment of the price to be paid for the declaration of a strike. Now, there are exact dates and figures for you. What is your answer?"

"That you are talking through your hat," sneered Wilmington. "If Mr. Bradshaw has made any such cock-and-bull statements, I repudiate them entirely. Get out of my way."

"Another moment, please."

The cold politeness cut like a whip-lash, and with a gleam of vindictive fury in his eyes Wilmington made a move as if to thrust his opponent aside. Donald squared his shoulders more determinedly than ever, and, scornful even in self-defense to lay a finger on the man, folded his arms. But these very arms suggested the strength of coiled springs of steel, and the banker instinctively receded.

Brodie calmly resumed:

"Just listen again. You have pretended that there are other bondholders than yourself. You have used the argument many times as a cover to your own individual actions. Only the other night, for example, you persuaded Mr. Sheldon to dispense with my services by this very threat that otherwise the bondholders would foreclose and seize the plant. Now I assert before everyone here that you, Arthur Wilmington, are the sole and only bondholder."

"Mind your own business!" snarled Wilmington. It was the savage snarl of a hunted mountain-cat at bay.

"You deny it, then?"

"I do."

"Good! Now there is an easy way to put this matter

to the proof. Give us the names of any three bondholders besides yourself—yes, the name of any single bondholder. The telephone is over yonder. We can ring up the men you name, and prove at once whether it is you or I who speak the truth."

Wilmington's frame shook with anger.

"Again I say that I decline to have anything to do with you."

"You refuse the names because you cannot give them."

"Stand aside, you hobo—you thief!"

But at the utterance of the last word it was Jimmy who flew at Wilmington's throat.

"You contemptible coward!" he cried. "Get out of this house! You have had your chance to deny the charge, and you can't do it. And for you to dare to speak to Donald Brodie like that—*you,* you lying fraud! Why, you aren't fit to tie his shoe laces! Clear out; nobody wants you here."

Jimmy was small, but two years of hard physical work had made him strong. He had swung the banker round and was backing him toward the hall door.

Mr. Sheldon gripped his son's wrist and disengaged his hold. He was face to face with Wilmington.

"Can you give me those names?" he demanded sternly.

"I refuse to be held up by you or anyone else," replied Wilmington defiantly. He was adjusting the collar and tie which Jimmy's clutch had disarranged.

"Then that is enough for me," said the ironmaster. "You will please discontinue your visits here. To-morrow morning I shall call at the bank to close the company's account."

Darting at Brodie a parting look of mingled hate and defiance, Wilmington took the right of way that had at last been granted to him.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE PIT OF HIS OWN DIGGING

Wilmington's departure cleared the atmosphere. During the short and sharp altercation no one had thought of sitting down; Mrs. Brodie had not even exchanged greetings with Leslie. The latter now advanced and, although her face was pale and her voice quavered, welcomed her guest affectionately.

"Dear me, but that was terrible!" murmured Mrs. Brodie, in a low tone intended only for Leslie's ear.

Brodie approached Mr. Sheldon.

"I hope you will excuse me, sir," he said, "for having made such a scene here in your house. But it was necessary to bring matters to a head, and the opportunity of our all being together was too good to be missed."

"You acted quite properly," replied the ironmaster. "But how did you get your facts? You don't mean to tell me that Dan Bradshaw has confessed to them?"

"He is not my informant at all. But perhaps you would prefer to hear about this after dinner."

"No, no; go ahead. Sit down for a few minutes, please, Mrs. Brodie. Let us have the story."

"Well, it won't take very long," acquiesced Donald, seating himself with the rest. "There are certain individuals whom I am not allowed to name, but the broad

facts can be stated. It seems that some time ago Wilmington incurred the enmity of a powerful tong in Chinatown. He wronged one of its members, and for years they have waited, for years they have plotted patiently and silently to get even with him. And it certainly seems to me John Chinaman's turn has come at last."

There was eager curiosity written on the faces of all present. Mr. Sheldon spoke.

"Why, I always imagined that he was close in with the Chinese crowd. They have done quite a business with him."

"Yes, but with a deliberate object in view. Acting on a preconcerted plan, his Chinese clients are now withdrawing from the bank, and before the end of the week their accounts will be closed and their heavy deposits taken elsewhere. I believe there were considerable withdrawals begun this very afternoon."

"That may not mean much. There has been quite a flutter on Wall Street to-day, and the Chinese are always the first to show timidity."

"What's up now?" asked Donald. "I haven't seen the newspapers."

"Oh, threatened foreign complications again," replied Mr. Sheldon, drawing an evening newspaper from his pocket and displaying the big-lettered heading across the page. "The bottom has been knocked out of the New York money market, and of course the effects are at once felt here."

"Well," remarked Brodie reflectively, "this general condition of things will hit Wilmington all the harder. And no doubt his Chinese enemies, with oriental astuteness, have promptly seized the opportunity, because anything like a public panic both covers and assists their attack. But all the same this attack has nothing to do with any crisis in Europe. Its cause dates back, as I have said, several years."

"Then what did he do to the members of the tong?" asked Jimmy.

"After the fire he loaned money on a certain block of land in Chinatown. The borrower understood that he was giving a mortgage, but it proved to be a deed of trust that Wilmington had got him to sign."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Mr. Sheldon. "Just the game he played on me. He made me believe that the difference was immaterial."

Brodie smiled.

"Yes, it seems to have been a regular business trick with him. Well, he foreclosed on the Chinaman, who never knew that he had lost every vestige of right to redeem the property until six or seven months later. The whole tong was aroused, the Chinese community could not afford to lose that block, and they were forced to buy it back at an extortionate profit to Wilmington."

"For the love of Mike!" murmured Jimmy.

"I aye thought him too smooth and sleekit-looking," commented Mrs. Brodie. But Leslie nervously clutched her arm, and she said no more.

"From that time on," resumed Brodie, "they've been laying their plans to get even with him. They accepted their losses with a smile, and gradually, one by one, opened accounts with Wilmington's bank, making larger and larger deposits, until now he holds more Chinese money than any other bank in San Francisco. But all this has simply been a means to an end."

"They are going to make a run on the bank?" questioned Mr. Sheldon, with a startled look.

"That is the idea. And to make it more effective they are undermining his credit in every possible quarter—with yourself, for example. It was to put you wise as to his treachery with Dan Bradshaw that one of their agents called on me this afternoon. Oh, these Chinamen have done their work thoroughly!"

"They can be ugly beggars when once aroused."

"For years they have kept him surrounded with spies," resumed Brodie. "He has little dreamed that there have been Chinamen at his elbow who presumably did not understand English, yet were quite proficient all the time. They have watched him at every stage, and have the most accurate knowledge of his private affairs, including the fact that he has locked up practically his whole personal fortune in the Sheldon company bonds. There were others interested with him at first, but under an agreement that he could take over their holdings. And this he has done, realizing steadily on other stocks, and even on real estate, to raise the necessary cash."

"Good God!" ejaculated Mr. Sheldon bitterly. "Then he has lied to me a score of times."

"Just as he lied to-night when he gave that flat denial," said Brodie. "But I knew he was only making a desperate bluff to save his face, no doubt relying on the fact that the bonds are still in his dummies' names, although transferred by endorsement and in his ownership."

Leslie now intervened. She spoke in a very low voice, with lips that trembled.

"Papa dear, it may seem horrid for me to tell, but I feel that you ought to know. Mr. Wilmington proposed to me again to-night, and offered to settle the bonds on me."

A thrill passed through the little circle of listeners—Wilmington's falsehood now showed so utterly crude and bare.

The ironmaster started to his feet, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing.

"And your answer?"

"There could be but one answer," she replied. "I told him that if you ever knew of such an inducement having been held out you would bitterly resent it. But in justice to Mr. Wilmington I should tell you, also, that he claims to have bought the bonds so as to save

you from ruin, and by giving them to me rescue the plant and keep it in the family."

"By the Lord, now I see the whole damnable game! That was the argument he used to you, was it?" Mr. Sheldon's tone was one of withering scorn. "To save me! The infernal scoundrel!"

Leslie went up to her father and buried her face on his shoulder. "Hush, daddy dear, let it go now. He will never trouble us again."

With an effort the ironmaster controlled his indignation.

"Thank God, little girl, you had the courage and good sense to turn the villain down!" And for several seconds he soothed and caressed her.

All through this intimate family conversation Brodie had sat with face averted, stern and silent, hearing perforce but giving no sign that he heard.

The dinner gong had boomed forth some time before, and had been disregarded. It now sounded again, timidly yet importuningly.

"We had better go to dinner," suggested Mr. Sheldon. "Dry your eyes, dear. Brodie, I think we'll give Wilmington a rest for to-night."

But Jimmy was still wrathful and pugnacious.

"By thunder, dad," he exclaimed, "I am only sorry you stopped me from flinging him over the verandah rail!"

Wilmington meanwhile was driving his automobile along the ocean boulevard. This evening he was his own chauffeur. He was going at a slow pace. The cold night air, the chance to be alone, the opportunity to turn things over in his mind, were all to his taste. For he, too, now saw the fatal error he had made when, slipping a cog of memory, he had given the lie direct to Donald Brodie about the ownership of the bonds in Miss Sheldon's presence. But in the moment of blind fury

he had forgotten that the girl was in the room, a witness of the encounter that had goaded him beyond endurance and for once in his life betrayed him into flagrant self-contradiction. He bit his lip. He was ashamed, not of the falsehood, but of his own momentary unguardedness.

At the Cliff House he descended. He lingered on the terrace, brooding and listening to the murmur of the ocean. Then he went to the café and ate his dinner, in a corner all alone, leisurely, putting in the time while he considered the situation and evolved his new line of action. Unlike many men in similar stress, he called for no wine; a demi-tasse of black coffee was his only stimulant. With cigar alight, he continued his meditations.

He was thinking now of Dan Bradshaw, but his bitter feeling was directed more against himself than against the confederate who had given him away. "Just what I should have expected"—it was all a part of the continuous game of craft and graft which Wilmington and scores of other financiers of his breed were accustomed to play, and the loaded dice could not always be slipped out of the one waistcoat pocket. When a man is playing crooked himself, he must be prepared to become at times the victim of similar crookedness. Therefore, while he was sore against Bradshaw, he indulged in no rancor.

Moreover, he had further need of the man, and for the present any bitterness and soreness would have to be disguised—this also was a regular part of the game. He was looking cold facts in the face, and could not but admit that his suit for Leslie Sheldon's hand was now hopeless. Henceforth this was to be counted as a closed affair, a poignant memory, perhaps, for a few weeks, a deep humiliation for a few months longer; but that was all. The girl was not necessary to his existence—already the freedom, zest and snap of bachelor-

hood and club life were beginning to look mighty good to him when contrasted with the cloying sweets of matrimony. On the whole, he was well out of the Sheldon love entanglement. But a way had now to be devised out of the Sheldon bond investment.

He had concentrated all his financial ventures into this one big coup. The security was ample, the deed of trust would ensure prompt payment of the interest, in ordinary times the bonds could be sold at face value or better, without the slightest difficulty. But these were not ordinary times; before him lay the evening newspaper with its scare headlines about demoralized stock and bond markets on both sides of the Atlantic. Then there were labor troubles all over America, and trust troubles—the government seeking to break up or at least control the vast monopolies of capital, the unions grappling at the throats of individual capitalists or corporations, just as here in San Francisco where Richard Sheldon was being assailed.

Panic intensified by sudden alarm but also induced by prolonged national uncertainty and anxiety, and therefore not to be dissipated in a day!

The plain truth was that the Sheldon company bonds, in which Wilmington had locked up all his available ready cash, were absolutely unsaleable at present except by private negotiation with some capitalist or group of capitalists seeking just such an investment. But a banker is always in danger if his securities are such that they cannot be turned at brief notice into coin or its equivalent. There seemed to have been a conspiracy of events to put Wilmington in a tight corner at this critical moment in the financial world.

Yes, he had need of Dan Bradshaw. Unless the strike at the Sheldon ironworks was promptly called off, it might be impossible even to borrow on the bonds—there had been times quite recently when the choicest gilt-edged securities were powerless to raise the all-essential

hard cash, and no one could tell when such conditions might not recur again. Already that very afternoon some of his Chinese customers had manifested nervousness over possible stringency in the local money market, and had withdrawn their deposits. This was no doubt only a temporary scare, and the money would find its way back in a few days. But the incident was disquieting, for Wilmington could not contemplate the large aggregate of Chinese deposits held by his bank without sensing possible danger from anything like a stampede among the oriental community.

As the line of thought developed, he realized all the more clearly the need of temporizing with Bradshaw. He rose from the table, repaired to the telephone booth, rang up a number, and in a quiet voice made an appointment for eleven o'clock at his rooms. It was now only nine. He went back to the terrace, lit a fresh cigar, and, despite the shrewd cold of the night, paced up and down, pondering the chances, marshaling his arguments, disciplining himself to stern repression of his feelings at the coming interview with his perfidious accomplice.

CHAPTER XIV

THE YEGGMAN OF FINANCE

Wilmington had been in his rooms only a few minutes when Dan Bradshaw was ushered up the service stairway by the smiling Chinese boy. The labor leader's face wore a somber look. After some unimportant remarks, he revealed what was troubling his mind.

"I don't want you to suppose, Mr. Wilmington, that I personally had anything to do with scuttling the barge."

The banker smiled cynically.

"Oh, that's all right. No explanations are necessary."

But neither the smile nor the avoidance of the issue were to Bradshaw's liking. His brow grew gloomier than ever, his voice rasped angrily:

"I am one of those who are against violence or the destruction of property."

"Surely, surely."

"The word got passed around, just as you wished it, that this consignment of goods was not to leave the yards. But I never meant it to be destroyed—that's a fool's game in a fight of this kind."

Wilmington shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, there's nobody kicking. I paid you to block delivery, you did so effectively, and I am not going to

find fault with the particular means employed. It is quite another matter I want to talk about to-night. I think the strike should end."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. You are aware, no doubt, that the machinery has been recovered, and that no serious loss on that account will fall on the Sheldon company. But you are not aware, I fancy, that Sheldon has succeeded in getting unlimited capital to back him in this struggle. There was one hundred thousand dollars paid into his bank account yesterday, and the offer of one million dollars made to take up the entire bonded indebtedness of the company."

"By whom?" asked Bradshaw, visibly perturbed.

"I don't know. Some powerful financial syndicate or group of employers is no doubt putting up the money. I do not claim to be any longer in Sheldon's confidence, and am resigning from the treasurership and the directorate of his company."

"Oh!"

"I don't want you or your unions to butt up against impossibilities. Therefore, it is in your own interests I advise that the strike should be called off now."

The rugged face of the labor leader grew more clouded still. With accustomed caution he deliberated for full a minute before continuing the conversation.

"In what way do you stand to profit by this?" he asked distrustfully.

"Oh, I'm quite frank. I've told you already that I have my market for the bonds. I'm going to wash my hands of the company and its affairs entirely. I am simply dropping you a timely hint, my friend."

"You were to pay us another twenty-five thousand dollars at the end of the month."

"Well, forget that, Bradshaw. I am certainly not going to throw good money after bad. From now on the strike is hopeless."

The other slowly raised himself erect and took a pace or two forward. He leaned down over Wilmington, his rigid arms and clenched hands extending behind his back.

"Which means, in plain words, that you have betrayed us!" he cried fiercely. "You are getting your money out again, and what the hell else do you care?"

"Don't lose your temper," replied the banker coolly. "I recognize hard facts when I'm up against them, and you had better do the same. It's not a matter of my saving the twenty-five thousand dollars I promised. Don't imagine that for one moment. To prove my disinterestedness and good-will, you can have that amount for yourself when the strike is declared off."

The rigid arms swung forward, the big brawny fists were upraised, and for a moment it looked as if Bradshaw was going to fell Wilmington with a double-handed blow that might have killed an ox. The threatened man cowered and pushed back his chair.

But with a supreme effort the labor leader controlled himself and dropped his hands by his side.

"Yes, you may well be scared, you doggoned scoundrel! You betray us, and would have me turn traitor, too! I don't pretend to know all your game. You may have a buyer for those bonds, or you may be simply trying to make them saleable. But that's nothing to me. The strike goes on. And let me tell you that whoever holds that paper will in the end have as his security, unless old man Sheldon backs down, nothing but a heap of scrap iron."

"I thought you were not an advocate of violence or destruction of property," retorted Wilmington. He had recovered his nerve and had followed the other's example of rising to his feet.

"Nor am I. I use my influence always in the opposite direction. But desperate passions have been aroused, and it is a question how long they can be kept in check

by men like me. If Sheldon shows a sign of winning, all hell will be let loose—take my warning."

"Well, so much the better for me to be out of the whole business," the banker coolly replied.

"Oh, I've looked for this," said the labor leader bitterly. "With a man of money, the only thing that counts is to save his own hide. You are a soulless, dishonorable crew."

Wilmington looked nettled and flushed slightly. "It is not for you to sling about charges of dishonor," he said, with dry emphasis on the last word.

"What do you mean?" Bradshaw drew himself up proudly.

"I told you at the start that there would be nothing more from me if ever I came to discover that I was dealing with double-dealers."

"Where have been the double-dealers?"

"It was understood that only you and I should know what sums of money passed in this room."

"And do you accuse me of breaking my word?" demanded the labor leader, again advancing with a menacing glare in his eye.

But Wilmington held his ground.

"Let me tell you that Sheldon knows every date and figure exactly," was his curt rejoinder.

"Through whom?"

"Certainly not through me," sneered the banker.

"And by the living God not through me," declared Bradshaw, with hands opened and thrown forward; and truth was written on the man's countenance.

For a few seconds Wilmington stood dumb. The denial had convinced him. He looked perplexed. Then all at once a light shone on his countenance. He strode across the room and flung wide open the door leading to the service stairway.

There was no one in the passage outside, no one on the circling stairs down which he peered.

Moving swiftly, he came back and went to the other door. He turned the knob and passed into the hall. No one there! Then he advanced to the end of the corridor. The door of the little sleeping room occupied by the Chinaman was open, the light was on, but the boy himself was not in evidence.

Momentarily baffled, Wilmington glanced back along the passage. The door of the hat and coat closet stood slightly ajar. He retraced his steps, stealthily now, and peeped in. But there was no crouching Chinaman among the garments.

One thing, however, Wilmington did discover—the slit in the woodwork through which came a ribbon of light from his own sitting room. He dashed into the closet and applied his eyes to the aperture. Bradshaw was in full view, seated near a table not six feet away!

"My God!" he cried, in a voice that brought the labor leader to his feet.

The two men met in the corridor.

"Look through there," said Wilmington, pointing to the illuminated peephole.

Bradshaw stepped into the closet, and when he emerged again his face showed full comprehension.

"And the smug saffron-faced devil has cleared!" groaned Wilmington.

There was a moment's pause.

"I don't care a hang what he has seen or heard!" exclaimed Bradshaw brutally. "My hands are clean—every dollar you gave went anonymously to our union fighting funds, as I said they would and as the book entries will show. With you, of course, it's another matter. You betrayed your friends, and have been yourself betrayed. It serves you damned well right for employing a Chinaman."

Without another word, the labor leader stalked out of the place, by the front door this time. Reaching the landing, he touched the button for the elevator, and,

having descended, was sped on his way by a cheery "Good night, sah!" from the negro janitor, who all the same scratched his head in perplexity as to when the gentleman had gone upstairs.

Wilmington was now alone in his rooms, very much alone, with not even a Chinaman to keep him company. The master missed the boy, worse at this moment than he had ever before, for he longed to have the chance of wringing the neck of the softly flitting traitor whose perennial smile and perennial excuse of "no savee English" had been accepted as guarantees of guilelessness.

The duplicity of this Chinese servant brought an uneasy train of thought. What about Quong Sing, the comprador at the bank, whom he had for some years employed as his private clerk, entrusting him with confidential information in preference to any of his own countrymen? His breath came quicker. He now recalled that piece of sharp practice in Chinatown some years ago—the heavy price he had squeezed out of the orientals, priding himself at the time on his business smartness. Then an uneasy thought recurred about the withdrawals of deposits at the bank that afternoon, about the raid that could be made on him if his Chinese customers in a body closed their accounts. Great heavens! Was this a case of revenge? Were the cunning, implacable devils going to use their special knowledge of his affairs to ruin him?

The bonds!—yes, these bonds must be sold without delay—he must protect his position with hard cash. He had distrusted Bradshaw momentarily, but all his old faith in the stalwart honesty of the labor leader had returned. Conceivably, within a few hours, with a mob let loose, much more than a million dollars' worth of machines in the Sheldon works could be reduced to the value of scrap iron. The bonds might be counted as scrap paper then.

They must be sold, but, by the Lord, not to any clique

with which Donald Brodie was associated! He had hated him always, but he hated him more than ever now —the gum-shoe sneak in league with spying Chinamen! No; the bonds would not be suffered to go to Brodie or his friends. Who else was a possible buyer? Leaning forward in his chair, with both hands pressed to his brow, the banker pondered the question.

All of a sudden he sat bolt-upright. The name of Octavia Carew had flashed into his mind. He had heard a whisper about her great gains from oil discoveries on lands she owned near Bakersfield; a banking friend had told him that her accumulated royalties of one barrel in eight from the Big Bend gusher alone, recently paid, had amounted to nearly $1,000,000. Great Scott! She was the very party upon whom to unload the Sheldon bonds. The old girl could afford to carry the risk of expensive machine tools being turned into scrap metal.

At the thought, the banker smiled. He felt the deal as good as closed. Just a little persuasion might be needed. But the Sheldon bonds could be made to look exceedingly attractive to Miss Carew, with Jimmy engaged to marry her niece. Wilmington knew Frank Fern, her business man—knew him pretty well. He was but a youngster, too, and would be dead easy to handle. He could jolly him along by pretending that the strike was near an end.

And this yeggman of the financial world, after being balked in an attempt to filch, at the price of the bonded indebtedness, an operating plant and land and buildings worth intrinsically more than three times the sum, was congratulating himself on having discovered a woman, unversed in business and unsuspecting, on whom he could foist the million dollars of paper when it had suddenly and unexpectedly become of very precarious value indeed. Yet it was he who could in virtuous mercilessness denounce the common thief who stole a purse

containing $60 gold—for the good of society, so that the sacred rights of property might be preserved!

Before nine o'clock next morning Wilmington was in Fern's office. Yes; Fern understood the banker's position at this time of panic and his natural desire to convert bonds into liquid assets. And Miss Carew, right enough, had the money available; she was indeed looking out for an investment. Fern, of course, could not speak positively, but he thought it quite likely that his client would favorably consider the proposition. He would ask for an option over the bonds until noon, when he would call at the bank to take delivery if the deal was to go through. After a few minutes of due deliberation, Wilmington consented to give the option—he would hold the bonds to Fern's order until twelve o'clock.

When Wilmington reached his bank he found quite a crowd, mostly Chinamen, already waiting for the doors to be opened. There was excited chatter all around; he fully realized that something approaching a run on the establishment was at hand. But he passed through the throng with a supercilious stare.

Soon after ten Mr. Sheldon was announced. The bank president received him with frigid politeness. Offended pride and wounded dignity were his defenses now. The ironmaster on his side was quite content to restrict the conversation to the business of closing the Sheldon company's account.

As he turned to leave, Wilmington handed him formal written resignations from the treasurership and the board of directors of the corporation. Without comment, Mr. Sheldon put the papers in his pocket and departed.

Wilmington, alone in his room, looked grave. He knew well, as a banker, how serious it was for him to have lost this big and important account—how talk and

rumors on the subject would be rife in every bank throughout the city within an hour of the new account being opened at some rival institution.

But he had little time for thinking just at present—there was a heavy correspondence on his desk, and he tackled it with an air of resolution.

At half-past eleven the head cashier came to him with an anxious face—if the withdrawals continued at the same pace, more cash in hand would be required long before the closing hour. Wilmington spoke reassuringly; told the man not to worry, to keep on paying, and—most important advice of all—to smile!

Promptly at noon Fern arrived, carrying in his hand a leather bag that told its own tale. Yes; the deal was through. Miss Carew had agreed to take the bonds. Half an hour passed while Fern carefully examined the bundles of certificates brought from the strong room, seeing that coupons were intact and that the necessary transfer endorsements had been properly made.

"All correct," he said, as he dropped the last bunch into his bag. Then he drew forth his pocketbook. "Here is a certified check for the amount, Mr. Wilmington."

With this the young lawyer rose and snapped the lock of the bag.

Wilmington stood up, took the slip of paper and just glanced at the amount and the certification.

"Thanks, Mr. Fern. Good morning."

He spoke in the easy manner of the banker accustomed to handle large sums—without a tremor of the voice to betray emotion of any kind.

But when Fern was gone Wilmington sank back into his seat. The check was still between his fingers; he looked at it a second time; his visage became contorted with vindictive rage.

The order to pay $1,000,000, duly certified, bore the signature of Donald Brodie!

The side door opened; the cashier was once more in

the room. Wilmington instantly recovered himself. The official's nervous and apologetic look showed why he had come again.

"Take a taxi, Mr. Bell, and two men with you. Rush round this check to the First National, and bring back the million in gold and bills."

With a sigh of relief the cashier raised his eyes from the certified check upon which he had bestowed a careful scrutiny.

"We'll be just in time," he commented.

"By the by," asked Wilmington, "where is Quong Sing this morning? I haven't seen him."

"Oh, he sent a message. His brother is dangerously ill in Tacoma, and he started for the north last night."

Wilmington's lips curled into a vicious sneer.

"Who is looking after the Chinese accounts, then?"

"Ping Wing. He is managing all right."

"Well, Mr. Bell, please keep a watchful eye on Ping Wing. Damn those Chinamen!" He could hear through the closed door of his room the excited gabble of the orientals crowding the banking hall. "Now get that money here, quick!"

Yet the million dollars did not save the bank. For three days Wilmington fought with the finest nerve and courage. But the times were dangerous, with capital hunting for safe hiding holes. There was help from other banks, but not help enough. The run persisted; it was white men now, no longer Chinamen, who were withdrawing their cash balances. Some malignant taint of ineradicable suspicion seemed to have attached itself to Wilmington's name.

On the Friday morning, pasted on the outer glass doors, appeared this notice:

"CLOSED BY ORDER OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF BANKS."

CHAPTER XV

THE MOB

Once more the consignment of machinery for the power-plant in Nevada was ready for the railway. The box-cars were packed and sealed, the flat-cars carrying the heavier pieces in their swathings of burlap protected by extra battens and tarpaulins. For, although the spur track beyond the yards was now repaired and closely guarded night and day by the police so as to prevent renewed damage, it was quite on the cards that the train itself would be subjected to rough treatment on its way to the freight depot.

Several weeks had elapsed since the suspension of Wilmington's bank, and during that period feeling among the strikers had grown virulently embittered. For it had been noised abroad that the bonds had been taken up by some powerful and friendly syndicate, so that Sheldon's financial position, instead of being one of weakness, had come to be quite impregnable.

Accordingly the labor campaign had been promptly changed from passive waiting on events to fierce aggressiveness. Pickets had been redoubled, threats had taken the place of attempts at peaceful persuasion, and a considerable proportion of the workers had been intimidated into quitting their jobs. The stalwart remnant were now housed and fed within the works, and there

had been more than one ugly street riot when wagons had forced their way in with the necessary supplies.

Brodie and Jimmy had not left the plant for ten days, and during the past two nights Mr. Sheldon himself had insisted on sleeping there. Mrs. Brodie, with Donald away from home, had gone to keep Leslie company in the big house on Russian Hill. This also was now closely guarded by the authorities, even the surrounding streets being illuminated after nightfall by arc lights because of threatening rumors that dynamite might be used against the stubborn old ironmaster in the desperation, not of the responsible labor leaders, but of individuals in the ranks imbued with anarchistic sentiments.

An anxious, pitiful time for all concerned, with the whole city waiting fearfully, impatiently, and now even resentfully for a termination to the prolonged and injurious conflict.

The train of freight-cars stood behind the swing-gates, which had been strongly reinforced with heavy balks of timber. At its head, with steam up, was the yard locomotive, familiarly known among the men as "the goat." The engineer and the fireman were in the cab, the rest of the employees—foremen, mechanics, laborers, office staff, a scanty fifty, all told—grouped anxiously around. For the general operations of the plant had been suspended; it was tacitly realized that the crucial hour had come—that the fate of this shipment of goods would decide the fate of the combat.

Mr. Sheldon stood near the exit, looking paler and thinner, but carrying himself with an alert, businesslike air that showed unshaken confidence in the justice of his cause. It was close upon three o'clock in the afternoon, an hour when the workmen of the city generally would be busy in their respective places of employment, and the chances of a mob gathering would therefore be minimized. Beyond the barricade was ominous silence. But by peering through holes in the fence those within

could see masses of men ranged along the railroad tracks, grimly expectant, and a large force of police officers keeping the gateway clear and holding themselves ready for all emergencies.

The first sound of the bars being thrown down brought forth a shout of angry voices from the outside. Brodie approached the ironmaster and spoke a few words. Then he moved over to the side of the gently throbbing locomotive.

"I am going to take the train out, George," he said, addressing the engineer.

The latter, quite a young man, demurred.

"Oh, I'm not afraid," he said firmly. They were bravely spoken words, and true, no doubt, despite the pallid, set face.

The gates were now slowly opening, and into the yard rolled another menacing roar.

"I know it, old man," replied Brodie kindly, as he climbed into the cab. "But this post is mine; the responsibility could not rightly be yours."

Behind Brodie another figure had sprung on to the deck of the locomotive—it was Jimmy Sheldon.

"I'll fire for you, Donald," he said.

The eyes of the two comrades met, and not another word passed.

Jimmy at once applied himself to his duties, peeping in through the aperture provided for the purpose at the oil burner shooting tongues of flame into the fire-box. Engineer and fireman had descended reluctantly to the ground.

"Good luck, then, to both of you!" called out the former, waving his cap aloft.

"Pull the bell, Jimmy," said Donald quietly, his own hand on the throttle.

And the goat commenced its sonorous bleating.

The gates were swung wide open. Near the end of one of the side screens thus formed the mob caught a

glimpse of their arch-enemy, the ironmaster, and for more than a minute volleys of execration and abuse filled the air.

The locomotive gave a snort and was in motion, and as it emerged from the fenced enclosure dead silence momentarily fell. The only sounds were the clanging of the bell and the puff-puff of the exhaust steam.

But soon a brick came hurtling through the window of the cab, shattering the glass into fragments and missing Brodie's head by a couple of inches. And as if this had been but a signal shot, a perfect rain of stones and other missiles descended on the locomotive, accompanied by a frenzied babel of yelling.

The entire train of cars was now outside. Could Donald have glanced back, he would have seen numbers of the infuriated mob swarming on to the flat-cars and endeavoring to tear off the protecting tarpaulins, while constables with brandished truncheons were pulling them back. But the man with his hand on the throttle kept his eyes steadily ahead. The track was clear.

"I'm going to hit her up, Jimmy," he muttered, and with a succession of violent jerks the goat flung itself forward, then with swift, easy motion glided along.

Brodie was dimly conscious of several figures with hands upraised in an attitude of cursing, with white faces spitting bitter hate, scurrying to right and left almost from under the wheels of the locomotive. But he gave more and more steam, and the train was now attaining a good speed.

At a short distance stood a couple of big warehouses, one on each side of the track. Clustered in front of these was a strong body of police. In an instant Brodie grasped the situation and threw the throttle wide open.

When the train had swept into the narrow way, the howling mob, surging behind, was effectively blocked by the quickly formed barrier of policemen. On reaching the further end of the passage between the ware-

houses, Brodie cast a glance to right and left, and as the locomotive dashed along he caught sight of the first flying forms of the strikers coming around the obstructing buildings. But the race was won; regardless of street regulations, the train was shooting ahead at a speed that quickly left behind the baffled pursuers and the waning echoes of their wrath and discomfiture.

"That's all right," said Jimmy, rising from his crouching attitude on the floor of the cab. "I guess we're through, old man. My word, though, weren't they in a fury?"

But Donald was still intently gazing ahead, and made no reply. Along the road came occasional jeers or exasperated shouts from scattered groups. There was no more serious opposition, however, and after a few minutes the freight train was safe within the railroad yards.

All the necessary papers had been sent on in advance during the morning, and little time was lost before Brodie had the signed waybills stowed in his pocket.

"Come with me to the ferry," he said to Jimmy, as they left the freight offices; and without further explanation asked or given they boarded a passing street-car.

Arrived at the waterfront, Donald drew Jimmy to a quiet corner.

"I want to hire a motor-boat," he said. "It will be wiser to get your father out of the plant right away. I don't like the look of that mob. There was hunger as well as anger in their cries."

After the launch had been moored at the Sheldon wharf, the ironmaster at first stoutly objected to the idea of leaving the works in such a skulking, back-door fashion. But when he was asked to look out of the office windows, and beheld the packed mass of humanity that had now gathered in front of the main entrance, beyond doubt to await his appearance, prudence prevailed. Jimmy and Donald decided to escort him to

Russian Hill. They would return later to the plant. Meanwhile, Robbins, the foreman of the boiler-shop, was left in charge, and it was noted that the police were guarding both gateways so as to debar access to the yards. Everything seemed safe for an hour or two, at all events.

Dinner that night was a minor matter, but it was just as well for Jimmy and Donald to eat at the Sheldon home as anywhere else. Robbins had telephoned that the mob, having learned of Mr. Sheldon's departure, had dispersed. Brodie was glad to remain; he wanted a straightforward talk with the ironmaster this very evening, and he wished both son and daughter to be present.

They had all drifted into the music-room, not for piano-playing or singing at such an anxious time, but simply because it was the accustomed place of adjournment.

Brodie opened fire at once; he was desirous of returning to the plant with the least delay.

"You will recognize, Mr. Sheldon, that this cannot go on. The situation has grown intolerable and impossible."

"I agree with you. The military will have to be called out. We must revert to my original proposition."

"Which was?"

"Strike-breakers from the east—that is the only way to meet organized outrage."

The irate employer, who had been pacing the room, stopped short and raised his hand to enforce this expression of opinion.

"There is another way," urged Donald. "There can be peace with honor—peace without either the military or the professional strike-breaker."

"Pshaw! No more kid-glove methods for me. It is the smashing blow that's wanted."

"Won't you kindly sit down? Won't you hear what I've got to say?"

"What is the use of talking? My God, I owe it to the men who have supported me by taking up those bonds to see this fight through."

Donald fell silent for a moment. Then he rose to his feet.

"Excuse me, Miss Sheldon," he said, with a glance toward his hostess and his mother seated together on a sofa. "I want to telephone. I won't be long." And he left the room.

"Do come and rest, daddy," pleaded Leslie, getting up and pushing forward a comfortable easy-chair.

"I'm not tired, my dear," he replied, a little testily. But he sat down, nevertheless, and after a moment leaned back his head wearily. Leslie's hand stole for sympathy into that of Mrs. Brodie as she watched, with tears welling into her eyes, the worn, wan face of this iron-willed man.

Brodie came back and resumed his seat. Mr. Sheldon instantly sat up again, alert and combative.

But Donald gave no sign of returning to the interrupted conversation.

"By the way, mother, was there any mail for me to-day?" he asked.

"I don't know, Donald; I haven't been down the hill. We haven't crossed the door to-day, have we, Miss Sheldon?"

Leslie must have divined that Brodie wanted to gain time.

"Jimmy, won't you put on that new record for us?" she asked, with a glance at the phonograph cabinet. "Have you heard Tetrazzini, Mr. Brodie?"

"I'd like to," he replied absently

Leslie knew that he was thinking of other things, but she went and found the disc for her brother, and after a moment the voice of the great singer, revelling in the

trills of a gladsome polonaise, was pouring forth cascade after cascade of notes that seemed to fill the room with flashing gems of sound.

No sooner had the song ended than there came a tapping at the closed French casement. Aunt Octavia and Norah had "just dropped in." Wraps were thrown aside, there was a little buzz of general conversation, and then Brodie at the first opening adroitly returned to the attack on Mr. Sheldon.

"Jimmy and I will have to get back pretty soon to the plant," he began. "But before going I should like to resume our talk, and explain what I meant by a peaceful ending to this ruinous conflict."

The ironmaster frowned; the old determined snap came into his jaw.

"Let me hear what you have to say, then!" he answered sharply.

"You have won a big victory to-day in putting that machinery safe on the railway. In these humane times the cry of the conqueror is not *vae victis.* He extends the hand of friendship to his fallen foeman."

"Not much!" gritted the ironmaster.

"Victory too complete may be more costly in the end than defeat," continued Donald. "Call out your soldiers, get in your strike-breakers, grind the unions into the very dust. That is all possible—perhaps within your power. But you will leave behind you a legacy of bitter hate and sullen wrath that will put the clock of progress here in San Francisco back by a generation. You and I and all of us may be gone"—this with a glance around the intently listening group. "But the rankling wound of enmity between class and class will remain, to cause persisting misery and suffering."

"Oh, that's your old highfalutin' talk, Brodie. In a fight like this we've got to stick to stern facts."

"I am coming to these. This bitter quarrel can be

terminated, if only now in the hour of victory you show the victor's true magnanimity."

"You want me to compromise?" was the swift demand.

"That is the word—that is the only solution—that is your bounden duty, if you will pardon my saying so."

"Surrender my business to that gang of labor agitators?"

"Not at all. There is a middle way right through the whole list of their demands."

Quivering with impatience, Mr. Sheldon made a move as if to rise from his chair. But Donald, with his calm, resolute eye and his quiet, resolute voice, held him down.

"Bear with me just a minute, please. If you will recognize the unions, if you will agree in future to engage only unionist hands to work with the great majority of your employees who are already unionists, you can yet reserve the right to retain your old non-unionist employees, unmolested and free to remain out of the unions, should they so choose."

Again the ironmaster would have interposed, but again the speaker kept him in restraint.

"If you give a voice to the unions in fixing the proportion of apprentices, you will be conciliating them without reducing by one the number of learners taken on in accordance with your own regular custom. If you will gradually bring your establishment under the new system of scientific shop management which the government itself is introducing into its shipyards and arsenals, which unionists in many eastern plants have already accepted as just and equitable, you will be retaining the principle of premiums side by side with the unionist minimum wage."

Mr. Sheldon at last sprang to his feet.

"All that would be complete surrender!" he cried indignantly.

"Not surrender, but compromise," insisted Brodie,

"the most sacred law imposed upon civilized mankind to-day."

"Oh, I know all your quixotic arguments about that. But you call such a giving away of everything compromise, while I call it surrender—abject surrender. What would those new bondholders say, I ask you again—the men who are backing me to fight this battle for industrial freedom to the bitter end?"

Donald Brodie glanced at Aunt Octavia. She nodded her head in silent assent.

"Ask Miss Carew," was all he said, folding his arms and resting back in his chair.

Mr. Sheldon swung round toward his visitor.

"Where do you come in in such a controversy?" he queried brusquely.

"As a bondholder," replied the old lady, with the sweetest of smiles. "As the only bondholder, I may say. It was I who bought the bonds, the whole lot, so that they might be in safer hands than they were before."

The ironmaster was so taken by amazement that he dropped back into his seat. Surprise was depicted also on the faces of Norah, Leslie and Jimmy. Only Mrs. Brodie remained serene and undisturbed.

"And I bought them, too, mind you," continued Aunt Octavia, still beaming happily, "as a real good investment. But it can prove to be that, Richard, only if you exercise common sense. I endorse every word Mr. Brodie has said. There must be the spirit of compromise shown, or there will be disaster."

Her face now became grave, her accents earnest.

"And let me tell you a plain truth: You think that the capitalists of San Francisco are backing you, that they are not going to see you downed, as you call it, by the unions. In thinking this, you are making the mistake of your life."

Mr. Sheldon squirmed, and would have spoken, but

she in turn quietly suppressed him with a little wave of her hand.

"Oh, don't contradict me. I move about a great deal more than you. I hear both sides of the question. San Francisco is positively sick of this fight, and the capitalists are more sick than the labor men. You should just hear what some of those you count your supporters say about your mulish obstinacy in not accepting the modern situation and recognizing the unions."

Mulish obstinacy!—this last, unkindest cut of all left the ironmaster almost speechless, but between his ground teeth he managed to articulate:

"Recognize the unions! Never, never!"

At this very moment the silence of the outside night was broken by a great uproar—the shouting of an angry, hungry horde, just as Brodie and Jimmy and the ironmaster had heard it during the afternoon down at the plant.

The color forsook Leslie's cheeks. She rushed to her father, throwing protecting arms around him.

Donald rose and said quickly:

"Don't be alarmed. Let me go and see what they want."

He disappeared by the unlatched casement, and they heard the door of the screened porch beyond swing to behind him. For a second Jimmy had, like the others, been held under the spell of the unexpected tumult, but now he darted after Donald.

The women were alone with the ironmaster, and once more came the howling of many voices, cries of bitter taunting and invective. But of a sudden all grew still. A deep hush followed, which not even whisper or sigh was permitted to disturb lest any sound from without should escape their straining ears. The tension was snapped at last by another shout—but this time an applauding shout. Then there was silence again, succeeded by more cheers.

A minute later Brodie and Jimmy reëntered the room. The former was pale but composed, the latter in a fever of excitement.

"You should have heard him bring that crowd to reason, sis," he murmured, in fervent admiration.

Leslie had come forward and grasped her brother's arm.

"Whatever is happening?" asked Norah, in breathless eagerness.

"Oh, it's all over." Jimmy was now speaking to the room at large. "Brodie has promised to address the strikers at the labor temple to-morrow night, and meanwhile they have gone quietly home."

"I am so thankful," murmured Leslie, "oh, so thankful!"

She gazed for a moment at the resolute figure of the man, and marvelled at the dominant will that could so quickly quell the passions of a mob. Then she returned to her father, still seated, unnerved, downcast and dismayed, the picture of broken pride. She could read his thoughts—assailed by the pleading of his best friends, and then insulted by his enemies in the sanctity of his own home. Kneeling by his side, she pressed his hand consolingly.

Donald joined them.

"You will be subjected to no more annoyance, Mr. Sheldon," he said reassuringly. "There will be no disturbance at the plant to-morrow, although I do think it might be as well for you to remain at home. Just turn things over in your mind, discuss them with the bondholders"—this with a grave smile toward Aunt Octavia. "Let us be off now, Jimmy. I shall come straight here and report to-morrow evening after the meeting with the men."

He turned to kiss his mother good night. Leslie glided to his side.

"You will take care of yourself?" she said earnestly.

Her solicitude brought a tinge of red to his cheek.

"Oh, don't worry about me," he laughed pleasantly. "I am going to bring you back peace with honor—you may rest assured."

CHAPTER XVI

THE TEMPLE OF LABOR

For hours that night Donald Brodie lay awake, pondering things, recalling incidents, renewing and retouching thoughts that had grown to be familiar, studying the patterned mosaic into which the apparently haphazard events of his life were now arranging themselves. He could look back to many momentous occasions when a choice of ways had been open to him, and he had chosen unwisely, as he had afterward often fancied, wrongly, as the world would no doubt decide if an appeal were made to its verdict. Yet now he could see that everything had been shaped for a divine purpose. Through the mists of mystery was glinting the first spark of comprehension, and subconsciously his soul was awaiting the fuller radiance that would dissolve the encompassing clouds and reveal the landscape, its beauties or its unknown dangers, through which the hand of God was guiding him.

There was no defined conception of this kind in his mind. He was just "thinking things over" in plain, matter-of-fact fashion. Yet in his heart was a dreamy sense of reverential wonder for the inscrutable workings of Providence, for the unfathomed and unfathomable enigma of the struggle and strife of human existence from generation to generation, from century to century, from eon to eon.

He had never forgotten the sermon of the preacher in the college chapel—the sermon telling that God is love and love is God. This had exercised an enduring influence over his life, the sentiments suggested intensifying themselves and expanding themselves through frequent cogitations. Love implanted in the heart of man is the spirit of God. Deeds of loving-kindness are the service of God. Love is the gospel of God revealed to all men. Love is the prize of life, the love and esteem of those around us the consummation of earthly happiness. When death comes, love is the noblest heritage that can be left behind, for mere money may take unto itself wings and fly away, may possibly become an instrument of evil; but the memory of loving deeds performed endures for all time by impelling other minds to the performance of similar deeds, so that with repeated impulses the waves become never-ending and ever-extending, eternal in their power of beneficence.

It is such a thought as this that should make a man fearful to leave a possible kindly action unperformed—should make him still more fearful knowingly to commit an evil deed, for the reacting waves of evil are just as enduring and far-reaching as the waves of good. And no act, however tiny and inconsequential it may appear, but counts. An infant born and living for but a single hour before it sinks back again into the ocean of eternity may have only dimpled for an instant the face of the waters. But it may have softened a woman's heart, or stirred a man's conscience, and so set in motion wave-forces which at their inception might have needed a micrometer for their measurement, but in the end become mountain-high billows of potentiality.

There are two things that never return, said the wise Sultan Omar—the sped arrow and the spoken word. If anger but pauses to think of the eternal and immeasureable consequences of every deed, the upraised hand will be dropped, the bitter taunt will die unsaid; if it

is love that momentarily reflects, the fingers will reach forth eagerly to do the kindly deed, the lips will tremble in their haste to speak the kindly word.

Almost unknown even to himself, this religion of love had come to permeate the mind of Donald Brodie until its promptings had grown to be the natural ordering of his life. He had many a time gone back a couple of blocks to bestow a dime on some maimed beggar, not so much that the coin might help to feed, as that the act of sympathy might warm the heart of its recipient at a moment perhaps embittered by the indifference of a passing multitude.

He had longed to bring Richard Sheldon, the stern employer, the obdurate antagonist, to see things in this mellowed light—to prove to him that, notwithstanding the popular saying to the contrary, sentiment is not only compatible with everyday business, but can help it along. To pay a man a good wage is good business, but to pay him with a smile and with manifest interest in his welfare and happiness is better business still. Then in the controversies incidental to business, sentiment on the other side must be reckoned with always. For employers to assume that the trades-union movement is actuated solely by sordid motives is woefully to miss the truth. The essential basis of trades-unionism is sentiment—the working man's love of his wife and children, his home, his kith and kin, his longing to win happier conditions, not merely for himself but for those dependent on him and around him. And precisely because of this has organized labor won all its victories in the past, for sentiment rules the world and will always in the long run prevail.

Brodie had tried to influence Mr. Sheldon, but hitherto had wielded no real power. Now, however, events had made him the virtual dictator of terms. The puncturing of the belief in which the ironmaster had almost pathetically indulged—that unknown capital was rally-

ing to his support, that unexpected and all-powerful forces in reserve were still behind him—was the final stroke that must bring the proud fighter to bend the knee, however reluctantly, to the inexorable law of the compromise. Therefore Donald no longer counted the employer as a doubtful factor in the ultimate solution. He was debating now how best he could swing the unionists and their leaders into line.

And in tranquil faith that all would go well, at last he fell asleep—amid the sleeping engines and machines whose awakening would depend upon the success of his efforts to spread the gospel of mutual forbearance.

In the morning Brodie and Jimmy breakfasted without leaving the plant. They had noticed that the usual pickets were posted, but there was no evidence of any likely disturbance. Jimmy repaired to his duties at the power-house — there would not be much power wanted that day, but he could overhaul the battery of boilers. Donald went the round of the shops and instructed the foremen. Everything was to be gotten ready for full resumption of work on the morrow, and the few hands in each shop were set to tasks of oiling machinery, cleaning up and putting the plant generally into its accustomed order. Among the men was vague wonder as to what was going to be the upshot, but Brodie's brisk manner and air of alertness were infectious, and here and there cheerful whistling could be heard.

During the forenoon Aunt Octavia telephoned to him from the Sheldon home, where she and Norah had gone to lunch. She had found her old friend in a reasonable frame of mind and was certain that there would be no real difficulty with him now when definite terms of settlement came to be presented. Leslie, Norah and his mother all joined with her in wishing him good luck at the evening meeting. There was a glow of satisfaction

in Donald's heart when he hung up the receiver—he felt more assured than ever as to the outcome.

At the noontide interval Robbins visited him in his office. The foreman had heard that Mr. Brodie was to attend a meeting of the unionists that night. He and a few others among the hands would be glad to act as his bodyguard. "You never know what may happen, sir, and we want to be around if there's going to be any rough-housing or attempts at slugging."

Brodie was touched by the kindly offer. He pointed out that there was not the slightest likelihood of trouble of that kind. But he would be delighted to have Robbins and his mates present. There were to be no restrictions as to admittance.

It was after four o'clock when a telegram was delivered to Brodie. The message was from Washington, D. C., and was signed by a California senator whom some months previously the superintendent of labor had conducted over the plant, spending nearly a whole day in his company. It urged that every pressure should be exercised on Mr. Sheldon to bring the strike to a termination, because if this were done immediately the Bureau of Construction and Repairs was disposed to recommend to the Navy Department that the contract to build one of the two cruisers recently authorized by Congress should be awarded to the Sheldon Manufacturing Company of San Francisco. The importance of such a contract to the city itself and to the state was emphasized. The senator explained that he wired to Brodie personally because he knew his great influence with Mr. Sheldon and believed he was the one man capable of handling the delicate question.

When he had read this message Donald's face beamed with enthusiasm. He went to a set of long drawers and produced therefrom a plan of the entire plant, and when Jimmy came in shortly after five o'clock it was to find his friend busy with a pair of compasses over the blue-

print, measuring the extension of Slip No. 3 that would be required and locating the exact position of the giant shear-legs, capable of lifting weights of 100 tons, already in the shipyards but not yet erected.

"What's in the wind, now?" asked the newcomer.

"Read that," replied Donald, pushing over the telegram.

"Whew!" Jimmy gave a whistle of surprise. "My eye, won't the old man be tickled to death! I should say he will tumble over himself to end the strike when he hears about this."

"Just as I think. And the news will make the men take notice, too. Wait till I put this drawing away. We'll dine downtown together before going to the meeting."

The big auditorium on the top floor of the unionist headquarters was packed to its fullest capacity. Not only were the strikers present, but many of their wives as well. There were also sympathizers from other unions not directly involved in the fight, and even a sprinkling of capitalists and employers. It had been at Brodie's request that the doors of the labor temple were thrown open to all and sundry who might care to attend, and the throng occupying the floor space, also filling the long side gallery, would number not far short of a couple of thousand.

With Jimmy Sheldon at his side, Donald entered the hall. Surveying the vast assemblage, he was not dismayed; although he had never before addressed a public meeting, he was sustained by a strange feeling of exaltation inspiring him with confidence that in this supreme hour he would not fail either himself or the cause of peace he was championing.

Dan Bradshaw received him at the entrance and conducted him to the platform. Brodie's appearance there was greeted with a cordial round of applause, for the

man's grit was known to all, and even the courageous way in which he had run the locomotive out of the yards on the previous day could not but command their admiration.

The labor leader appealed for a fair hearing to the speaker of the evening, and then Donald stood alone, facing the dense mass of upturned faces.

At the very beginning a thrill of surprise ran through the gathering. He spoke of the old slave days, when capital took from labor its toll with the brutal lash as its weapon. And the blight of slavery, he passionately declared, was still upon the land.

Men sprang to their feet and cheered vociferously. Already with unconscious skill the orator had won his audience and stirred them to the depths.

Yes, slavery, although in modified form, reiterated Donald. And that the social conditions still holding the country in bondage were inherently wrong and cruelly unjust was proved by the very fact that successive broods of millionaires could be reared every few years, while many millions of the nation's workers toiled for the bare necessaries of existence and were never a hundred dollars to the good till the day they dropped their tools for the last time and died.

Again came frenzied and deafening applause, and it was fully a minute before Brodie could resume.

This inequality in the distribution of the products of labor and of the soil—the ultimate source of all wealth, as it is the soil that provides the sustenance of all mankind—in itself established the case, not against capitalists, but against the social conditions that made the flagrant inequality possible. Many of the richest men in America themselves admitted the radical injustice of conditions that enabled them almost without effort to pile million upon million until they found it difficult to give away wisely their accumulated riches. Some of these restored the superfluity of their wealth to the peo-

ple in the form of universities, libraries, hospitals and other beneficent institutions. But where were the untold millions of the others who retained them for their own selfish ends or ultra-extravagant enjoyment—for whom vast holdings of stocks and bonds were just as truly exacting a merciless daily toll from bending, toiling forms in factories and plants as did the whip-lash on the plantations in the old and reprobated slavery days?

A deep hush had descended upon the audience; the argument appealed so forcibly to nearly every man and woman present that they held their breath in the very intensity of their feelings.

Social conditions must be wrong, continued the speaker, that enabled any single individual to apply to his own uses tens of millions of dollars or to give them away in the name of charity.

The strain was broken, men again sprang from their seats, voices cheered, and hats were frantically waved.

One figure leaped from the front row of seats onto the platform.

"Mein Gott, dot's ze red-hot stuff!" he shouted, in a delirium of delight, as he pounded Brodie between the shoulders.

This was Otto Schwartz, the German, the leader whose extreme views caused many of the unionist body to distrust him as a possible anarchist and wrecker of all established things.

There was a lull, during which Patrick Hogan, the diplomatic and popular Irishman, induced the over-exuberant Teuton to resume his place.

Then from Donald came full half an hour of simple, straightforward, hard-headed logic whereby he expounded the necessary slowness of evolutionary change, and the law of the compromise, by which alone, step by step, inch by inch, progress toward the fairer conditions desired by all could be made and steadily maintained.

Violence and anarchy meant delay; evolution meant the assured ultimate attainment of the goal. In a few sentences he reviewed the achievements of trades-unionism in the past. He showed how concessions to-day were being readily made which a brief decade ago were flouted and scoffed at as impossible. He predicted still more liberal concessions in the near future, but insisted that, as in the past, nothing could be gained except in accordance with the law of give-and-take, the law of mutual yielding, the law of the compromise.

Thus he gradually reached the actual dispute at the Sheldon ironworks, showing how peace could be immediately restored. He boldly promised recognition of the unions, the closed shop under the restriction that no old employee should be forced against his will into the unions, but with a guarantee from the labor side of open unions. He agreed that a voice should be accorded to the unions as to the number of apprentices employed. Next he explained in detail the new scientific system of shop management whereby the minimum wage might be retained side by side with the premium system, and would without any attempt at "speeding up" ensure for the operatives better wages by awarding them a liberal share in the economies effected.

Then came the final appeal. These changes would require a little time, but recognition of the unions would be immediate, the right of the unions to share in the task of threshing out the details cordially conceded. They were well acquainted with young Mr. Sheldon.

"Jimmy Sheldon—he's all right!" cried a voice in the crowd, followed by a round of cheers.

Well, Brodie was speaking for Sheldon Junior to-night, and he believed that within an hour every concession he had outlined would be confirmed by the elder Sheldon.

"I make you this proposal, boys," were Donald's closing words: "Return to work at once under the guaran-

tee now given of changed methods in the management. There is compromise on both sides; we shall be getting together on the middle ground. And let me counsel moderation for other reasons still. We all love California, we all love San Francisco, yes, and we all in our heart of hearts love the great plant where we perform our daily tasks. Here in my hand is a telegram from one of our senators in Washington, which tells us that there is every chance of a cruiser being built in the Sheldon company's ironworks to carry along the glorious record of the brave old Oregon, if only we make an end of this unhappy dispute without further loss of time."

There was a flutter among the audience, the passing of eager, whispered words. The reference to the famous battleship which in the hour of national danger had steamed around the Horn, stirred Pacific Coast pride—many of those present had helped to drive the rivets in her mighty frame of steel, or to make the engines that had stood the test so well.

Brodie's voice stilled the momentary buzz.

"By your leave," he continued, "I'll hand the despatch to our good friend, Mr. Dan Bradshaw, so that he may read it to this meeting. You all know the man who sent it, how dear to him are the interests of the working classes, how well assured of his ground he must be before he would have wired in these terms."

The labor leader stepped forward, took the telegram, and read it aloud. A broad smile passed over the faces of some at the allusion to pressure on the ironmaster, but the downright sincerity of the message itself, coupled with Brodie's frankness in submitting it just as it had come from Washington, told with the assemblage. Plaudits came from every quarter, subsiding as Brodie resumed:

"The building of this cruiser would mean employment for many more hands in the Sheldon ironworks, exten-

sive orders for materials to be placed without delay, hundreds of thousands of dollars distributed through San Francisco, and our city resuming its rightful position among the big naval construction centers of the country. There is and can be no actual pledge given, but you will all see for yourselves that immediate industrial peace will help to bring this government contract to San Francisco.

"Now I shall leave you to discuss with your leaders what I have laid before you. I neither seek nor desire to take any power out of their hands. But I am a man of prompt action, and I would say—come back right now on the strength of what I have said. My word is my bond, and if the whistle blows at eight o'clock to-morrow morning this signal will mean that a new era has commenced at the works which will be honorable for trades-unionism and ensure years of happiness and prosperity for all the employees. When the gates are thrown open every man can go back to his old job—every man punch his old number on the time-clock."

There was a practical directness in the last words that touched a soft spot in many hearts. Men exchanged nods with each other, and there were such calls as "Seventy-nine for mine," "What about eight-twenty-four, old man?"

Then above these individual sallies, after just a few moments of hesitation, a great burst of cheering swept through the hall, not frantic as at the outset, but ringing none the less with sincere approbation.

A general murmur of conversation ensued. Donald at the far end of the platform was speaking earnestly to Dan Bradshaw.

"I know you always advocate peace, Mr. Bradshaw. But you must be perfectly well aware that your men were out of hand yesterday—that another riot like that would carry you and your brother leaders clean off your feet, and lead to destruction of property and bloodshed,

and God knows what else besides. To-night you recover full control. I leave the rest to you. Good night."

As Brodie moved toward the exit, he encountered a gloomy look from the German leader, obviously crest-fallen because the appeal to passion had petered out into an appeal to reason.

But at the door Hogan overtook him, and hooked him by the arm in friendly familiarity. A touch of the mellifluous brogue imparted added suavity to the Irishman's words:

"That was real elegant, Mr. Brodie. You're the man for us. Our council could work with you and young Sheldon here all the time." He gripped Jimmy's elbow as all three advanced toward the stairhead, where he left them.

It was with a sigh of relief that Donald breathed deep down into his lungs the cold night air. The boiler-shop foreman and the others of the old guard had followed from the building.

"Get to the telephone, Robbins," said Donald, as he returned the man's hearty handgrip. "Pass the word around among the foremen that the whistle will blow to-morrow morning sure. I'll be glad if they can be at the plant by six o'clock at latest—that includes yourself. Thanks to you boys for coming here to help me to-night."

Brodie and Jimmy were now alone. The latter spoke; on his face was an expansive grin:

"Now for dad and his humble pie, eh, Donald? That was a pretty generous slab you ate for him to-night, old fellow."

"Oh, he'll come through, Jimmy."

"Well, I've half a mind to let you tackle him alone. Have you any objection to my taking in a picture show? I'll turn up within an hour."

"Not on your life, Master Jimmy! Nor do you mean it, sonnie. Here's our car. Hop on."

CHAPTER XVII

PRIDE CONQUERS PRIDE

Outside the Sheldon residence were the glaring electric lights and the special constables on duty guarding every avenue by which suspicious characters might have gained access to the grounds. Within was a scene of what looked to be domestic tranquillity, although the nerves of all those gathered together were at tense and their several occupations merely a mask for agitated expectancy. Mrs. Brodie was industriously knitting, adding row upon row to the interminable Shetland wool shawl. Miss Carew professed to be reading the evening newspaper. Norah was at the piano softly playing one dreamy valse after another. Leslie was listening to the music, apparently entranced but hearing not a note. She furtively glanced every now and then in the direction of her father, who at the further end of the room was deep in the silent enjoyment of his after-dinner cigar.

The ironmaster, despite assumed composure, looked careworn and weary. The day of rest at home had been a trying day for him. It had been a regular field-day for the womenfolk. From early morning they had been skirmishing around him, sniping with stray arguments whenever the chance offered, coming at him one after

the other in echelon formation, subjecting him at intervals to platoon firing, pressing the siege with truly feminine pertinacity.

He was being permitted a respite now, and the sardonic reflection in his mind was that if these four formed a fair bulk sample of California womanhood it was small wonder that the cause of female suffrage had been won at the state elections.

Aunt Octavia had handled the business end of the controversy, speaking for the bondholding interests, insisting on the commercial prudence of concession, pointing the foolishness of sacrificing practical considerations to moth-eaten prejudices. She had contrasted her own condition with that of her old friend. Here was she—never had a quarrel all her life, had bought, twenty years ago, then-called desert land down in Kern County at ten dollars an acre, had quietly waited until it gushed oil, while if she had worried over the investment the tract would have been sold long ago at the mere profit of agricultural value. And there was he—been fighting all through the same period, wearing himself out body and soul, and at the finish was in danger of losing everything he possessed. Were worry and fighting worth while? The logic might have been weak, but the contrasted picture was sufficiently convincing to make the ironmaster groan inwardly over the tough luck that had pursued him.

Mrs. Brodie had dosed him liberally with her son's philosophy, defended trades-unionism by citing some of the terrible abuses it had already rectified, argued that as the workingmen could never gain anything except by combined effort this in itself justified the demand for recognition of their unions, and earnestly pressed the contention that kind and considerate acts toward others always brought their full and sure reward—that good deeds around us are like blades of grass "ilka ain o' which keps its ain drap o' dew."

Norah had been more captivating in her advances. She had recommended a good six months' holiday; she would take the whole party in her car down to Paso Robles—a few weeks of the sulphur baths there would rejuvenate the tired ironmaster; then they would go up the mountains to the National Park, where the giant sequoias would make his smokestacks look like so many tin whistles and all his troubles sink into insignificance, and where Jimmy and Donald Brodie could join them for their vacation; after which there would be other trips, indicated by the young open-air enthusiast with a delightful flow of words and the most winsome of smiles.

Leslie, too, had pleaded for rest and change—with moistened eyes had implored her father to consider his health, leave Mr. Brodie and Jimmy in charge of the plant, take a holiday, as Norah had suggested, and have a happy summertime all together, away from the bickering, toilsome world.

And so what with dollars and sentiment, smiles and tears, Mr. Sheldon all day long had been the target for almost every conceivable argumentative missile, and if he had not yet hauled down his colors, the halyards were temptingly between his fingers. The one withholding influence, although he might not know it, was nothing more nor less than obstinate pride.

The grandfather clock in the reception hall had chimed the hour of ten when at last the young men arrived. Jimmy's face was aglow.

"My word, talk of spellbinders! Donald had the meeting cheering him from start to finish." This aside was Jimmy's salutation to the girls, who had advanced to greet him, eager for the news. "Yes, Mrs. Brodie, you would have been proud to be there; he was great, simply great! Hullo, Aunt Octavia! The whole thing is as good as settled if only dad will quit bucking the

unions." As he addressed Miss Carew, he glanced at his father, to whom Donald had gone direct.

"Well, Brodie, and how did the meeting go?" asked Mr. Sheldon genially, nonchalantly, and scarce withdrawing the cigar from between his lips. He had risen to welcome his guest, and the latter felt rather than saw the trembling of the outstretched hand.

"Couldn't have been better, sir. But before I tell you about it I want to show you this telegram. I received it late in the afternoon from Washington. You can get a contract for a cruiser from the government."

"What's that? A cruiser?" With a hand that now fairly shook he clutched at the paper held forth by Donald.

This was the actual message from the senator, just as it had been received, with its blunt references to pressure and delicate handling, just as it had been read to the assembled men, for Brodie had decided that there could be no stronger influence brought to bear on either side in the controversy than the plain truths of the situation.

He watched the ironmaster narrowly as the latter perused the despatch, slowly and deliberately, line by line. When he saw the eyes return for a second reading, Donald quietly observed:

"It will be for the good of all, Mr. Sheldon—city and state, the company, and yourself as well."

The ironmaster read on again to the end.

"God, wouldn't that be grand?" he murmured, looking up at last, his face quivering from emotion.

"Sure it will be grand," concurred Donald. "We can have the big boat ready for the water in less than a couple of years."

"And the price I have to pay?"

"Recognition of the unions under proper safeguards —practically, that is all. You have fought long against it. But now is the time to yield, with dignity and honor

to yourself. And I'll be proud to help you build that ship for Uncle Sam."

For a moment Mr. Sheldon turned his face away. The heaving of his shoulders told of the terrible struggle with his pride. But there was a greater pride now to swell his soul—the pride of patriotism that overwhelmed the selfish personal pride. His eyes shone with exultation when they again met Donald's watchful regard.

"With God's help, Brodie, we will build the cruiser!" he exclaimed. "My life dream realized!"

Donald cordially clasped the hand extended to seal the compact which these words implied.

"Then to-morrow morning the whistle blows?" he queried.

"Be it so. To-morrow morning the whistle blows."

The ladies were now gathered round Mr. Sheldon, congratulating him, commending him, thanking him, tears of happiness in every eye. The old warrior disentangled himself

"I guess, Norah, you can get your big touring car overhauled," he said quietly.

"You will come?" she cried, in accents of delight.

"Yes, I'll come. I'm going to rest, Brodie, for a spell. You and Jimmy will take up the management of the plant. But I'll be home again when you're ready for me to drive the first rivet in the cruiser's keel plates."

"Good, dad, good! You need a rest; you've earned it, dear old father!" And Jimmy hugged him as he had never hugged him since childhood days.

"And before everyone here, Donald Brodie," said the ironmaster, "let me thank you from the bottom of my heart. I realize all I owe to you." One arm was still on Jimmy's shoulder. "Words cannot express my feelings, but you know what I mean. And if I have been short-tempered at times and snapped you up sharply, I would ask you to forget it."

"Say no more, Mr. Sheldon, please," replied Donald. "This is a great hour for all of us. I don't think I was ever more overjoyed about anything, eh, mother mine?" And in his exuberance he gave her, before them all, a good old-fashioned kiss.

Then a hand stole into his, timidly, and on turning round his eyes met those of Leslie Sheldon, steadfastly regarding him, full of gratitude.

"And I, too, have to thank you, Mr. Brodie," she murmured, "over and over again."

He returned the gentle pressure of her fingers; he was blushing red as he replied:

"Come now, Miss Sheldon. Let it go at that. It is I who have to thank you for so many things."

"Including chicken sandwiches and coffee waiting in the dining room," interjected Norah, the irrepressible. "Leslie declared that you wouldn't be able to eat a morsel of dinner before that great speech of yours, so she prepared this lunch with her own fair hands."

It was Leslie who was blushing now, but as hostess of the house she led the way to the table where the good cheer was spread.

The others, who had dined, joined in for the sake of companionship, and there was merry talk around the hospitable board. Jimmy started the fun by congratulating his father on forsaking the *via dollar-osa* for an automobile spin on the *camino real*—the royal highway along which the banks grow poppies, the plants breathe sweet perfumes, and the only whistle heard is that of song-birds. The stern old ironmaster smiled at this flight of fancy, and mildly suggested that his son's few months at the power-house had developed unexpected powers.

Mrs. Brodie remarked that others besides Jimmy were making fine progress, and after her talks with Mr. Sheldon that morning she would now count him as being in the kindergarten class of social economics. He playfully retorted that, as she had proved such an adept in wield-

ing the big stick, she had better, despite her advanced years, get Norah to teach her golf at Paso Robles. With nimble wit, Norah drove this thrust home by gravely announcing that it was a course of mud baths she had been contemplating for Mrs. Brodie "to cure the old lady's rheumatism," and on the Scottish dame flaring up and indignantly declaring that she was afflicted neither with old age nor with rheumatism, the prescribed treatment was stoically adhered to "for the rheumatism, then, she hadn't got, and for the preservation of her youthful charms."

It was Aunt Octavia's turn next for raillery, her niece promising that up at National Park there would be a special consignment of Chinese parasols awaiting her to help keep at a discreet distance any more big bears with hugging propensities too strongly developed. And after the giant trees, added Norah, with a mischievous side-glance, the mid-summer jaunt would be extended into Alaska, where Mr. Sheldon would have a splendid chance finally to cool off among the glaciers before returning among the men to take up his riveter's job.

At this last sally, the ironmaster pinched the saucy little chin. It was a new experience for him to have liberties taken by such a young minx. But he had to confess to himself that he liked it, all the same, and already amid the general laughter he was beginning to feel young again, all the more when he found Aunt Octavia calling him Dick, as in the old schoolday times.

The hour of light-hearted gaiety had sped, and now they were back in the music-room. Donald had announced that Jimmy and he would again, for this last night, sleep at the plant. There were many things to be got ready for the resumption of full operations on the morrow. They must be going; he himself had risen to say good-by.

But Norah came up to him, her usually laughing face very serious.

"Before you leave, Mr. Brodie, I want to tell you one thing. Leslie and I have been talking over matters today. And, do you know, it was I who that night years ago rang the mission bells at Riverside?"

She happened to be dressed in white; her beautiful, earnest countenance was uplifted toward Donald's. And he saw again the picture that had stood on the chiffonier in Jimmy's room in the old St. Louis days!

In dazed half-comprehension he pressed a hand against his forehead. The tears were in her eyes, as she continued:

"We had been a month at the Mission Inn at Riverside. I had learned to play the bells. That night I was thinking of my lost Jimmy, and I poured my whole heart into the dear old song, 'Will ye no come back again?' ".

"It was my mother's song—the soul of my mother calling to me," said Donald hoarsely.

"Yes; but my soul, too, calling for the boy you went to save."

The young girl in her agitation over these memories turned away and flung her arms around Leslie's neck. Jimmy's face was working with emotion. Mrs. Brodie, moved but not surprised—for with the second sight of an old Scotswoman she had divined it all long ago—was holding and patting Donald's disengaged hand, while with the other he still shielded his eyes.

In a distant corner of the room Aunt Octavia was conversing quietly with Mr. Sheldon—they were paying no attention to the others.

Norah soon regained her composure. Her face was smiling when, teardrops dashed away, she looked up again.

"Listen, Mr. Brodie, listen."

Off she darted to the piano, and with firm fingers descending down-pointed on the high treble keys she

picked out the melody in such a fashion that it became the veritable chiming of bells:

"Will ye no come back again?
Will ye no come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be—
Will ye no come back again?"

"Good night, all." With heart too deeply moved for other words, gulping down a great sob, Donald stepped out onto the verandah.

Here he lingered, waiting for Jimmy to join him. In his brain was a surge of thought. As he gazed up into the stars the overwhelming mysteries of interminable time and immeasurable space appalled him. But just as he had a few minutes before glimpsed the divine shaping of his own destiny, now his searching and listening soul caught the song of the celestial spheres swinging along their orbits—faint like the far-away chant of an angel choir proclaiming the eternal truth that all is well, that all creation is sweeping on triumphantly toward the God-appointed end.

A hand plucked his sleeve. He turned round to greet Jimmy. But it was the figure of Leslie that stood beside him in the semi-darkness.

"How strange and wonderful it seems," she said softly. "I feel how much you have suffered for all our sakes."

Her gentle words deeply stirred him; there was infinite tenderness in his eyes as he looked down into hers.

"It is very good of you to think like that," he answered; "far too good—something I don't deserve at all."

A quiver ran through his frame, but with stern self-repression he withdrew his gaze and continued in a firm tone:

"But I am glad to know that I have helped a little to end this unhappy strike."

He looked out into the night, and Leslie could not trust herself to break the silence that followed.

She was trembling with love and gratitude and admiration for this man. But he knew it not—he little dreamed that he could at this very moment have clasped her to his breast and taken joyful kisses from her lips.

It was by sheer force of will that Donald was now concentrating his thoughts on the plant, the machinery, and tasks to be performed. Leslie, watching the resolute look that had come into his face, saw that his mind was far away. A sigh escaped her lips. But he did not hear it.

At last he turned round.

"Thank God, Miss Sheldon, to-morrow morning the whistle blows! There will be work now to keep us all busy. And to-night we must make ready for the men. Where's Jimmy?"

"I'll call him," she replied, with a little sob, a little clutch at her throat for its repression.

Halfway across the verandah she caught sight of her brother, hat in hand, and she beckoned him to hurry.

"Good night, dear old sis," he said, as he kissed her in passing. "We'll talk about all this some other time. Here I am, Donald."

"Good night, Miss Sheldon," called out Brodie, before he descended the steps.

"Good night," she responded bravely. And then the rain of tears came.

But Mrs. Brodie was by her side and had gathered the weeping maid to her bosom. She had heard the good nights of commonplace courtesy, and the fluttering heart pressed against her own told its tale of disappointment.

"Dinna greet, my lassie. His mind is full o' other things. All will come right. Just bide a wee, dearie."

And high above them in the heavens the swinging

spheres were singing their eternal song that all is well. Over Leslie stole the grateful sense of being soothed and lulled and comforted. Her sobs ceased; she was happy now as she rested in the motherly enfolding arms.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WHISTLE BLOWS

Through the long hours of the night Donald Brodie was busy, with Jimmy Sheldon working under his direction. Together they went over the contracts on hand and planned the most effective resumption of the various operations that had been suspended during the three months of the strike. With the help of the watchers on duty, the whole battery of water-tube boilers at the power-house were fired, oil and water pumps started, the cupola furnace in the foundry set agoing, the core ovens lighted, supplies of rivets in the boiler-shop got ready for heating, the electric motors driving the machine tools tested, the powerful hydraulic flanging presses and bending rolls tried out; every detail attended to so as to make sure that the plant in each department was in complete working order.

At five o'clock Donald and Jimmy had a cup of coffee together. Soon afterward the foremen began to arrive and applied themselves in their several offices to preparing the time-cards for the special jobs to be first taken in hand. When finally Donald had seen to the adjustment of the time-clocks in the entrance hall through which the operatives would pass to the various shops, he felt that his task was completed—that everything possible had been done in preparation for the return of the full force of workers to their accustomed places in the great manufactory.

The momentous hour was now not far distant. From the president's room above the arched gateway Brodie cast a look down into the street. The regular pickets had evidently been withdrawn, but already little groups of men had begun to assemble. And Donald's face lighted up with satisfaction when he noted that nearly every man among them carried a lunch-box in his hand. He had never really doubted the success of his appeal that the strike should be broken. But this first confirmation of his hopes filled his heart with thankfulness.

Some time later he went to the window again. The scattered groups had become a massed throng, and there were quite a number of women and children, too, in the gathering, evidently come to witness the closing scene in the long drawn-out struggle. Some of the operatives had serious, set faces, but most were chatting pleasantly; at spots there reigned laughter and good-humored horse-play; everywhere the midday dinner packages were in evidence. It was no longer an angry mob bent upon destruction, but a peaceful army of industry intent on starting the day's work.

"Thank God!" sighed Donald fervently. The fight was indeed at an end!

He was alone in the room, and, overcome by the momentary stress of feeling, had sunk into a chair. But reverie was soon disturbed by the sound of cheering. He returned to his place of observation, to behold the gaze of many eyes directed toward the gateway, the waving of women's handkerchiefs in the throng. Someone had entered the offices—someone capable of evoking this tribute of personal popularity.

Donald wondered. He stepped to the outer office. There was young Sheldon on the landing ushering in Leslie and Norah! The girls were radiant with happiness—they looked like beautiful rose blooms blushing their welcome to the dawn.

"We just couldn't stay at home," declared Leslie, in laughing explanation. "Jimmy telephoned half an hour ago that the strike was over—that the men were waiting outside ready to come in. So Norah ran me down in her machine. We left it round the corner."

Donald was pleased; the weariness vanished from his eyes.

"The crowd was evidently delighted to see you," he said, as he shook hands.

"And you?" asked Leslie archly.

"Delighted also," he replied, his elated look giving added assurance to his words.

The office clock now pointed to five minutes of eight. The secretary was at his accustomed desk. Several of the chief clerks, salesmen and others from the business departments had been drawn together and to this room by the excitement of the moment. The stenographer sat before his typewriting machine, chair tilted back, thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, holding his breath, but with a fine assumption of *sang-froid.* He had glanced at the wooden handle close to his shoulder, hanging against the paneling.

But Jimmy Sheldon was already there, his fingers gripping the carved baton, his eyes fixed intently on Donald Brodie. He was awaiting the signal.

For the moment Brodie's attention was being claimed by Norah; she had made him aware of his up-all-night and disheveled appearance by laughingly recommending him to brush his pompadour. At this time, however, he could not give back jest for jest.

"It is close on the hour now," was his only rejoinder, as he drew forth his watch and compared it with the clock on the wall.

Thus he stood as the final seconds ticked themselves off. Then he snapped the case of his watch returned it to his pocket, and his eyes met Jimmy's.

"Let her go," was all he said.

In an instant the factory whistle sent its shrill blast into the air, young Sheldon manipulating the valve so as to produce a variation in cadences that imparted to the ear-splitting shriek at least the semblance of joyful triumph.

But even before these playful musical effects had ceased the sound of the whistle was drowned by the hurrahs of the multitude without the gates. It was a shout that smote the heart like the mighty thundering of the ocean.

Brodie knew what was happening; he had not to look through the window to see the eager throng pressing toward the open gateway. His emotion was too deep for words; he hardly dared to meet the eyes of those around him. He just managed to say, "Excuse me." Then he turned and reëntered the president's room—his own room since Mr. Sheldon had shared it with him. He felt that for a few minutes at least he must be alone.

Outside, the exultant roar continued, but more subdued now, like the continuous murmur of surf on shingle. He could distinguish the voices of women and children, shrill above those of the men. Dear God! How well he understood what it all meant—pinching and privation at an end, the spectre of accumulating debt routed, comforts in food and clothing for the younglings, happy instead of saddened and anxious homes. He sat down at his desk and buried his face in his hands.

The vociferous cries had subsided. Through the open windows on the other side of the room came the steady tramp of men's feet, occasional voices calling to each other in cheerful greeting: "Hullo, Bill," "Back again, old man," "Now we'll be getting busy." And above these other sounds could now be heard the hum of revolving shafts and belting, the rat-a-tat of machine tools, and then at last the ponderous thumping of a steam hammer. Brodie raised his face.

An ejaculation of surprise escaped him. At one of the windows that overlooked the yards stood Leslie Sheldon. She was motioning him to her side.

When he joined her she gave him both her hands.

"They have all come back again, Donald; they have all come back again!" she cried, her voice broken with agitation, tears of gladness welling into her eyes.

It was this first use of his Christian name that gave him courage to gaze into these eyes and hold them with his own. And in their depths he caught the love-glow. She, too, read his secret, and with a sob of joy she yielded herself as he drew her into his arms. Their lips met.

"I have loved you long, my darling," he whispered. "But oh, I never dreamed it possible that you could love me—*me!*"

"You have come to me at last!" she murmured. "I have never loved anyone—I could never love anyone but you."

For a moment they remained locked in each other's embrace.

"And in our happiness," she resumed, still nestling against his breast, "it is good to think that the sorrowful struggle is at an end—that our men have all come back again."

Once more she had used the old familiar words, and through the din of pounding and throbbing machinery there came to Donald's ears, soft and low, the chimes of silver-throated mission bells—the sweet mission bells that had sung to him that night among the eucalyptus trees:

"Will ye no come back again?"

It was the song of the bells that had brought him back to his manhood, brought him back to his dear old mother, brought Jimmy back to his home and to his love, brought the workers back to their employment, their

wives and children back to peace of mind and comfort. By hearkening to the pleading mission bells, by following the dictates of awakened conscience, the broken hobo had become once again the captain of his soul, had been restored to usefulness among his fellows, been privileged to aid in the accomplishment of many beneficent things.

And as the sequence of events passed in swift mental review, there and then was the veil of mystery parted for Donald Brodie. He knew now with the certainty of revelation that by loving-kindness and mutual helpfulness among the individuals the whole world of humanity was being swept on and on in irresistible evolution toward universal good and ever-abiding happiness.

THE END